





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

9/11

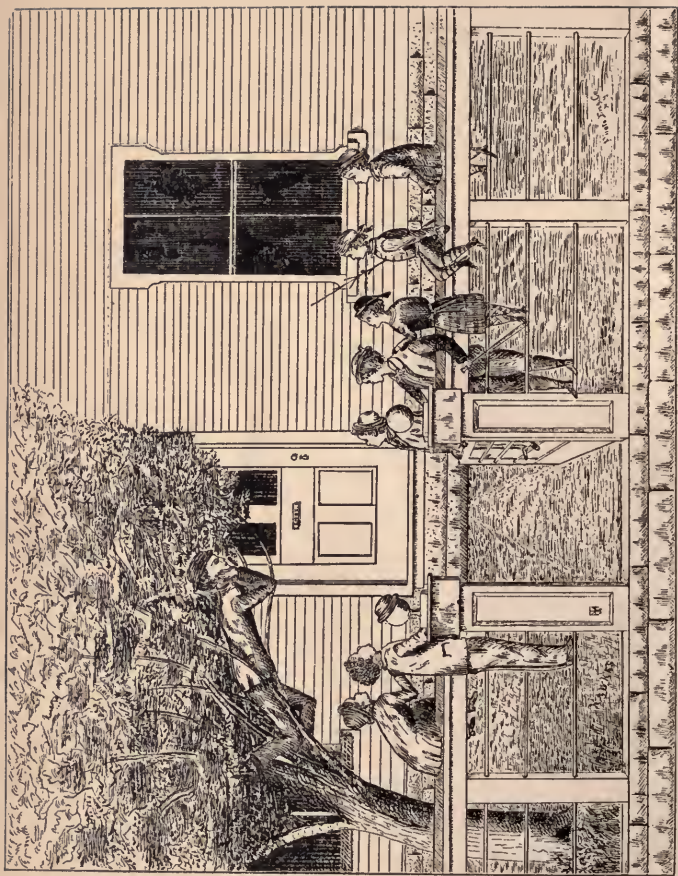
William B. Cardozo

Dec 24/77.



W. J. Cardozo





A N

Average Boy's Vacation.

BY
MARY S. DEERING.



PORTLAND, ME.:
PUBLISHED BY DRESSER, McLELLAN & CO.
BOSTON: HENRY A. YOUNG & CO.

1876

Copyright secured by
DRESSER, McLELLAN & CO.
1876.

PZ7
D36a

To MY SISTER.

622712



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Fourth of July is Coming, - - - - 7

CHAPTER II.

Is Here, - - - - 25

CHAPTER III.

Rob's Birthday, - - - - 40

CHAPTER IV.

Midsummer Maying, - - - - 49

CHAPTER V.

Surprising Mamma, - - - - 69

CHAPTER VI.

Helping Pack, - - - - 90

CHAPTER VII.

Summer Days, - - - - 104

CHAPTER VIII.

Prodigies, Faries, and a Zoological Matinee, - - - 115

CHAPTER IX.

Public Speaking, - - - - 131

CHAPTER X.

The Very Last Day, - - - - 149





AN AVERAGE BOY'S VACATION.

CHAPTER I.

FOURTH OF JULY IS COMING.

ALLEN street was short and not in any way remarkable so far as looks go. But it was an extraordinary street in point of boys. It was an extraordinary street, too, as regards the way of looking at boys. There are the nicest of people, who hold the opinion that boys are disagreeable facts, and that while there

must be boys of course, there must also be ways to keep them out of sight and hearing, and to prevent the neighbors from suffering in consequence of the boys' existence. But Allen street sentiment was different. There were quiet houses that sent out no boys to swell the whoop which, be the day fair or foul, never failed to rise at intervals from some yard or lane or sidewalk; and there were a few houses in which little girls gave a different air to household affairs. But the quiet houses were those that had once held boys whose voices the years had subdued, or had forever silenced; and memories like this do much to tone down the disagreeable noise of neighbors' boys. Probably no thought of reproof or frown from any old gentleman looking on at his pranks, ever cast a passing cloud over the spirit of an Allen street boy. A smile of half encouragement or at worst, of pa-

tient endurance, was all that he expected or received.

So Allen street neighbors were all that could be desired, while, as to numbers of his own kind the most social boy's heart must have been made glad. There were boys of every age, condition and complexion, from six weeks old to sixteen years, in every stage of mental and moral growth; boys short and tall; boys stout and slender; boys with black eyes and boys with blue. Every pair of legs was stout and active; every pair of lungs was strong and practised.

Allen street fathers and mothers held these prancing creatures with a rein tight enough when need demanded, but when the road was clear and no harm seemed likely to result, the reins were left loose. When every boy knows that at home retributive justice sits at the fireside or at the back-parlor register, a boy or two more or less is

of little consequence as regards confusion. But when every boy feels that what he does matters little so long as he doesn't get "in the way," one boy becomes a host in himself at whose advance any family may well be dismayed.

The morning on which I introduce to you the young gentlemen of Allen street, is a warm Saturday morning late in June. Over a low wooden fence four boys, of about four years old, swing their feet rather listlessly. Three others, a little older, swing their feet from gate posts near by. Another, still a year or two older than these, looks down from a tree which overhangs the fence. His thoughtful face is more than usually thoughtful, his elbows rest upon a convenient branch, and his chin is held tenderly in both hands. Not a word is spoken for several minutes. Clearly, a cloud hangs over the group.

"They're twenty cents a bunch," said Phil, at length.

Every face was instantly turned up toward the tree.

"Are they, really?" said Rob. "What do big ones cost?"

"Oh, there's ten-centers and five-centers, and I've seen twenty-centers, 'n' everything. If you've got lots of money you can get boss ones, but when you haven't, you've got to take the best you can get," answered Phil, from the tree. "Charlie White's got two dollars to spend."

A short pause.

"Well," said Rob, "anyway, we fellows shall have more than that by the time we get all our money together, 'n' there'll be just as much noise, *exactly*, if three fellers spend two dollars in fire crackers as if one spent it all. Or torpedoes, either!" he added positively.

"Oh, yes! *torpedoes!*" chorussed the four on the fence.

"Torpedoes *are* fun," said Rob, the solemnity of his face relaxing a little. "Don't you remember, all of you, when we were poppin' 'em last Fourth, and the boys were all over here in our street 'n' nobody dared to go through with horses, 'n' the man got so mad 'n' papa stopped us doin' it? Oh, that *was* fun!" Sometimes Rob's g's dropped off very fast.

"It was fire crackers that the man was so mad about, though," said Phil; "and it did scare his horse. The big cheesits 'll be after us this year if we fire too many crackers." (A cheesit is a policeman.) "But there's no flash to torpedoes and not so much fun."

"How's rockets?" said a newly-arrived boy. This arrival had a bat in his hand, and as he went by the fence an adroit

turn of his wrist brought the bat whizzing close to the four little faces. The whole row winced, but said nothing.

“That’s enough of that, Joe!” said sharply, Phil and Rob, together. “Take a fellow your own size.”

“What do rockets cost?” continued Phil. “We want the most fun for our money. How much money you got to spend?”

“Wheels ’n’ triangles ’n’ rockets are the fun!” said Joe, enthusiastically. “Haven’t got any money yet, but my father always gives me some for Fourth July. I never got as much as I wanted though, ’n’ I mean to get a lot of fellows to make a club and put in together, ’n’ get a pile of fireworks. ’Ll you join?”

“Oh yes!” shouted Rob, taking fire in a moment. “’N’ who else? There’s Phil ’n’ I’re one, ’n’ you’re two—”

"'N' we're free!" chirped an anxious voice from the fence.

"No, no, you can't earn any money!" cried Rob. "We big boys can sell newspapers and old iron and do errands, and save up all the cents that people give us."

"That'll do for awhile after dark," said Phil, cautiously, dropping from his tree and continuing the conversation with Joe. "But suppose we put in with you, who's going to have the say of spending the money? We want some fire crackers 'n' things, ever so many bunches, but we don't want many rockets. You seem to want more fireworks than anything else. The city government always fires off rockets; we might as well buy bells to ring as to buy rockets."

"Well," said Joe, "we shall all have some money of our own and we can spend

that as we want to. But s'pose now, as a club, we get our money first and vote how to spend it afterwards. We can get together and fire off things that belong to the club, and then we can stay round in the same place and fire off the things that we buy for ourselves. That way they'll last all day."

"Yes," said Rob, "there'll be plenty of rockets in Deering's pasture, and all the little chickens on the fence will have lots of torpedoes, and we've all got tin horns, and I've got a drum—lots of boys 've got drums—'n' there isn't so much fun in anything 's there is in crackers!"

During this rapid speech three or four boys from neighboring streets had silently added themselves to the group, all anxious as to the coming celebration, and excitement was soon at fever heat. A "company" was formed, shutting out the four

little people and including the seven "big boys." Phil, being made president, took his seat on a post, and the others gathered about him. Louis, Carl, Rex, and Jamie tumbled down from the fence and stood on the outside of the group. Since they couldn't "belong," they'd look as large as they could, and to this end they put their hands in their pockets and swaggered when they walked, in a way that would have done no discredit to a hotel waiter on a Sunday afternoon.

The "company" went on with the discussion of ways and means.

"Newspapers bring seventy cents a hundred," said Joe, "and our house is full of 'em. People buy 'em to tie round things at stores."

"Seventy cents is a good deal," said Rob; "and then there's old iron. They give two cents a pound for old iron—or

else it's two pounds for a cent. There's as much as ten pounds in the cellar, Phil."

"Old iron don't weigh so much at the shop as it does when you're carrying it there," observed Phil, sarcastically. "I'm going to sell my stilts and turn 'em into fire crackers."

"When the Free Street steeple was taken down the other day, Charlie White got ten pairs of pigeons, and sold 'em for twenty cents a pair, so he's ready for the Fourth. But then nobody else wants pigeons, and nobody is going to take down another steeple."

"Mamma always gives me something when I do errands for her," said Rob, "and there's always errands to do."

"Why don't you get a hand-organ?" put in Jamie. "All the boys would give you cents when you grinded."

"And get a monkey," added Carl, "and

when he wasn't at work we could play with him."

"Why don't you did deens to sed?" asked Rex, whose pronunciation would not come out straight no matter what his efforts.

"Of course we shant dig greens to sell nor get a hand-organ," said Phil. "That wouldn't do; but we could have a store — a boss store."

"And sell boats!"

"And guns, wooden ones."

"And books!"

"'N' old diaries!" This was Rob.

"'N' bats!"

"'N' balls!"

"'N' pencils!"

"'N' paper caps!"

"'N' dolls for the girls!"

"I'll put in my kitten! she's got fits!"

"I've got a bird's nest!"

"I've got a one-bladed knife!"

"All right, then!"

"All right!"

"Hurrah! come ahead on!"

And away went the seven, tumbling over each other as they went, hurrahing, shrieking, and shouting, and followed closely by Rex, Carl, and Jamie, crying: "det on! det on! do ahead! all yite!"

Louis, who never hurried, came up in a dignified way, softly whistling *America*.

"I've got a cart, you know, to take the bundles home in, and we little fellers'll be your errand boys," he said briefly to the president as he approached that dignitary.

"All right!" said the president.

An hour later, in a neighboring yard, the store was in full operation. Two boxes on end were bridged by a board. On this board was temptingly displayed the stock in trade to which as first proposed, had

been added refreshments. Hard bread, ginger snaps, sugar cookies, and sponge cake, were invitingly arranged, and a coat or two of dust mattered little to the average customer.

"There's nothing here for less than two cents," was the first announcement. But, though "runners" were sent out by the firm, and customers flocked in from neighboring streets, business didn't thrive. It was found that boys can't always command two cents at so short notice; no more can girls. So it was decided that nails and pins should be legal tender, ten of either being equal to two cents.

"We've got to make sales anyway," argued the seven proprietors.

Then, indeed, there were sales. The clerks were frightfully busy. There were loud cries of "cash here!" The four little errand boys deserted the cart and took to

their feet, carrying home paper boats, wooden guns, jack-knives without any springs, and tops without any strings.

"So cheap!" said the little customers to themselves and to each other, as they unrolled the papers.

At the end of half an hour the board was swept clean. The store was closed, and the "company" sat down on the counter to reckon profits.

"Ten's an easy thing to divide by, ain't it? Two hundred nails and three hundred pins—same as a dollar," said Rob, briskly.

"Well, not exactly," said Phil, "because we haven't any money."

"Let's divide 'em any way," said Rob, undaunted; "perhaps somebody'll give us some money for 'em." He had in mind the mamma at home whose sympathy with such enterprises was far reaching.

"It's fun to have a store, ain't it?"

continued Rob. "And the money don't make so much difference. Of course we always have some for Fourth July, anyway."

That night a long conversation on business took place between Phil and his father.

"I never shall keep a store," said Phil. "You can't tell whether you'll make anything. And I shan't be a lawyer; it takes too long to get started in business. Nobody is obliged to carry a case to a young lawyer. But if I should be a doctor and there was a baby within two doors sick with croup, nobody would wait to think how old I was. They'd just run and get me and I should save the baby. Then I'm all right!"

"That's so!" said Rob, admiringly.

"But if I'm a lawyer," continued Phil, "I might starve before I got any cases. What could I live on?"

"Oh, you know," broke in Rob, "that's easy enough; you could live on food."

"That's too silly, Rob," returned Phil. "Where is the food to come from?"

"I'll give you all the money in my bank," said Rob, promptly; "and there's seven dollars and a half, I believe. You could empty it all into the big bank and let it draw interest, or you could buy food with it. You can do just as you've a mind to about that."

"What will you do without it?" asked Phil, looking, as usual, at both sides of the question. "You'll be getting into business about the same time."

"Oh, I shall drive a hack. You drive a man to the station in the morning and there's fifty cents to pay for your breakfast. Then you drive a man from the station to a hotel, and there's your dinner. If your passenger don't pay, you can keep him in

the hack. I went down to the depot to-day with Johnny Lyman, a hackman 't I know, and he let me take the thing that he wears on his hat—it says hack on it—and I put it in the band of my hat. 'N' I went into the depot and hollered 'hack here! hack here, sir! Any part of the city, sir!' 's loud 's I could. And do you believe, a gentleman and three ladies engaged me, and went and got into the hack, and the gentleman gave me a nine cent orange! *That's* the boss business, you'd better believe. Anyway, we can divide my seven dollars and a half."

"But you know I've got more than that in my bank," said Phil.

"All right!" said Rob, cheerfully; "then we can divide yours just as well."



CHAPTER II.

IS HERE.

HLANG! go the bells; boom! go the guns; snap! go crackers; pop! go torpedoes; out of bed! fly the boys; Fourth of July is begun.

Rob tiptoes into his mother's room, looks out under the curtain, tiptoes to the side of the bed, and says in a loud whisper:

"Louis 'd better not wake up, 'cause he might asturb you, mamma."

"Whoop!" says a voice outside the window.

"Yes, in a minute!" shouts Rob, with a jump, and in a voice that fills not only the room but the house.

"In an instant Louis comes to the surface wide awake, and with his clothes in his arms save such as he has dropped on the way.

"Dress me! dress me quick, mamma!" he cries in a frenzy, dancing about the bed.

Rob makes a little heap of his clothes in the middle of the floor, and begins putting on one thing after another, but everything goes on wrong side up or wrong side out.

"Go fire a cap-pistol in Phil's ear to wake him up!" suggests Rob to Louis, but both are too busy to carry out the proposal.

Meantime, Phil has kept steadily on with the work of dressing, and just as Rob

notices that both his feet are in boots without stockings, Phil gives a shout outside.

Then a chorus of whoops rises from as many as half a dozen voices.

"Yes, *yes*, I'm coming!" shouted Rob, in despair, breaking his boot lacing.

"Yes, we're *coming*!" echoed Louis, slipping his face from under the sponge in his mother's hand.

How the dressing was at last accomplished in the midst of flying hands and feet, and confusion of little white heads and blue eyes and pink cheeks, nobody but the mother could ever tell.

How much of her careful warning as to gunpowder and matches and snapping-crackers, took effect upon the two little men who went scampering out with each a bunch of crackers and matches enough to burn up Allen street, nobody but the boys could ever tell.

"She didn't tell Phil so," said Louis to Rob, as they went over and over each other on the way down stairs.

"Oh, no, nothing'll happen to him!" answered Rob; "nothin' ever does; it's you little fellers she's worried about."

"Rob, is there any danger 'bout powder 'n' matches?" asked Louis, confidentially, implying by his tone all the distrust of his sex in a woman's estimate of gunpowder.

"Yes, *sir*," answered Rob, in a tone that carried conviction. "It's the boss stuff to blow yourself up with; I heard of a man once. You'd better do just as she tells you, I tell yer! An' don't keep too close to me 'cause I might blow you up, you see, by accident."

"Do you s'pose you shall?" asked Louis, anxiously.

"Oh, no, I guess not, only don't stay too close, 'cause I'm careless, mamma says."

Shouts were redoubled as the two appeared; several crackers went off in their honor, and in reply Louis tooted his tin horn which had hitherto been held sacred to Washington's birthday. A hint is enough. The little group quickly scattered in all directions, and in three minutes every boy was back at his place with a horn at his lips.

Toot — toot — pop — snap — bang — snap — bang — pop — *pop* — POP — POP — POP!!! Over and over the din died out, rose again, swelled, and died out; but when, at half past seven o'clock, breakfast bells began to ring, there was no sign of weariness nor lack of supplies.

"It's worth savin' up for, isn't it, Phil?" asked Rob, at breakfast. Rob had saved seven cents during the last three months.

Phil wished he had been "saving up" ever since Christmas.

"Bet ten snap crackers you don't know what Fourth of July is about," said Phil, by way of keeping up the conversation.

"Oh, I do!" said Rob, indignantly. "It's all about George Washington, and that's why there are horns. I saw a magic-lantern picture of Bunker Hill and the death of Bunker. *That's* why they fire crackers!" he added conclusively.

Explanations followed, but the history lesson took little effect, owing to constant efforts of the students to look out of one window or another, as well as the frequent excitement produced by the explosion of a fire cracker, and the plain inference that there were boys free from the necessity of coming to breakfast on Fourth of July mornings.

"Put 'em in a tin pan and shut down the cover, and you *ought* to hear 'em rattle!" said Rob musing.

"I wish I had a thousand billion of snap crackers" — began Louis.

"Hurt yourself — better have torpedoes," put in Rob, with his mouth full.

"No — crackers!" insisted Louis. "I wish I had a hundred trillion bunches of crackers, and there'd be a quadrillion thousand and eighty-four in every bunch. How many would that make?"

"Oh, that's a vigintillion," said Rob, learnedly, "but then you haven't got 'em."

"School committee and all the teachers couldn't do that without a slate and pencil," said Phil. "Hear *that!*" he shouted, as a whole bunch of crackers went off under the window. "Oh, mamma, *do* 'scuse us all!"

Phil seldom clipped his words but *excuse* takes more time in pronunciation than most boys can afford to spend when fairly ready to leave the table.

Away they went, and the popping began again. A large drum was heard. A broken violin was added to the celebration property. A flag appeared. There were a great number of horns and a "real fife," Rob said; "honest truly, black and bluely, lay me down and cut me intwoly."

A procession formed. Foreign population stopped on its way home from church, and all under fourteen years old joined the procession. The violin played nothing, the drum beat nothing, and the fife made no attempt at a tune, but there was a glorious noise.

The procession, including in its ranks a great many members ragged enough to have made good fantastics, marched several times through the street, into a lane and out again.

Carl, Rex; Louis, and Jamie followed in the rear, shouting with all the might of

their shrill voices, but holding tightly by each other's hands, half afraid of the ragamuffin force in front of them. At last, as the motley procession straggled by, four mothers advanced upon this rear guard and carried them all off.

There wasn't so much excitement as suits the Irish American mind, so the foreign element gradually grew less. A base ball match drew off the head drummer, the violin was tired, and the fife out of breath, and the originators of this great civic display found themselves sitting upon the fence in a dusty, draggled, forlorn condition.

There was silence for several minutes, broken only by a fire cracker in some back yard. A string of explosions made a slight sensation, and two boys proposed going to see about it.

"It's only some girls somewhere," said Phil; and silence fell again.

"*Don't* you wish we had some lemmunade — cold — with ice in it? and some pine apples? and some oranges?"

"Too early for lemonade. Never have it till noon; but there's a game of base ball on the promenade."

"Who plays?"

"Reserlutes."

"Derrygoes."

"Bet the Andrew-scoggins could beat 'em all, with one hand."

"Well, let's go up;" and away through dust and heat went the tired little crowd to sit in the sun for two hours.

Think you that they came home tired and feeling as anybody but a boy would have felt? Not at all. Two hours of rest acted like a charm, and by the time that the "lemmunade" had been disposed of, and dust, powder and lemon had been all washed off together, cleaner boys were never seen,

nor those more ready for whatever the afternoon might offer.

A fresh supply of crackers and torpedoes was brought out by every boy; mothers, with great misgivings, doled out matches; adjacent streets sent delegates to attend the festivities, and the celebration began again. All the large crackers had been saved till afternoon. "Ten-centers" and "twenty-centers" were common. What in the morning had been a pop was now a bang; what had been a bang was now a crash.

When the Allen street supply gave out there were plenty of boys to supply the lack. What was wanting in crackers was made up in noise and boys.

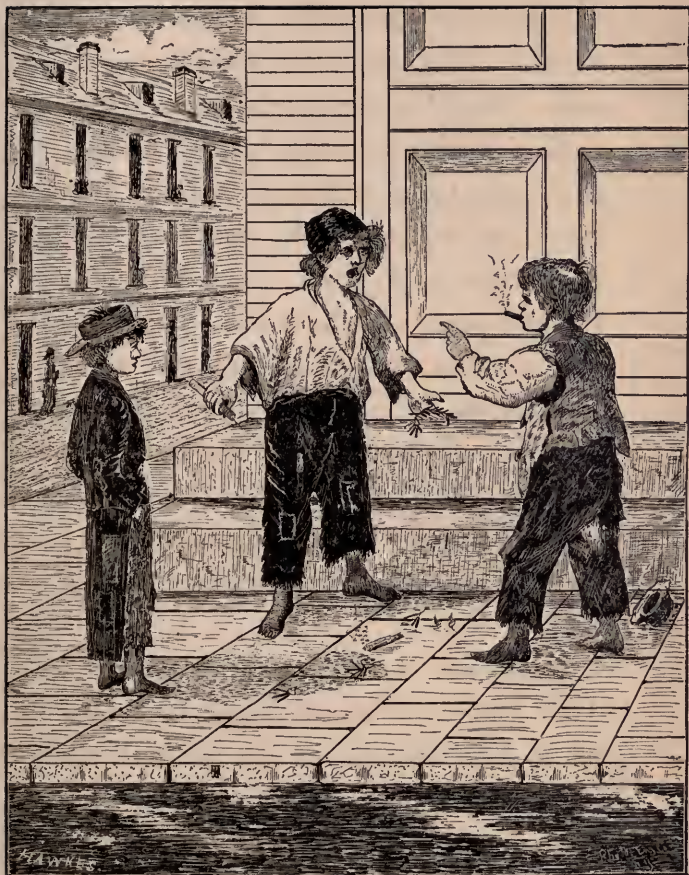
Upon the whole this afternoon performance was more dignified than that of the morning, just as an occasional crash is always more telling in its general effect than a frequent pop.

Fireworks — pinwheels, triangles, some rockets and a few fiery serpents — were sent off in Allen street quite early. They were sent off before dark, in fact ; because there were to be rockets in Deering's Pasture that evening, and, moreover, Carl, Rex, Jamie and Louis going in to the house at seven o'clock, it was thought fair to give them the benefit of the whole proceedings.

To be quite truthful, the fireworks were all over before supper. They would have looked better by night, I daresay, but the boys found them very satisfactory by daylight.

There was not a cracker left, and I don't suppose a torpedo could have been found from one end of the street to the other.

Now and then some ragged little fellow coming through the street, stopped among



the red, blackened bits, picked up one stump of cracker after another and applied a match to it; or if, as was more likely, he had no match, he put the stumps in his pocket to experiment upon by and bye. An exploded torpedo, with its best side up, deceived him, probably, but a used-up torpedo tells its own story at once, while fire crackers hold out great possibilities. Anything more dismal, however, than looking for treasures among exploded fireworks, can hardly be imagined.

Phil was much interested to know why all this kind of boys speak of a fire cracker as *she*; and Rob was shocked to find that a boy wanted a cracker, which he begged of him, "jest to shoot a caterpillar with."

"Why," said Rob, "he fairly *burst* the caterpillar, and that was awful cruel."

"What did the caterpillar do to him first?" asked Louis.

"Not a thing. It was sunning itself on a post."

"Well, it's *jest* as good as killing fish with a hook," urged Louis. "And you do that yourself, Rob Knox! You know you do."

"You don't say so! well, s'pose I do, I don't do it all for fun; fish have to be eaten. And I don't do it with a fire cracker! And fishes don't sun themselves on posts!"

Here were too many arguments: Louis gave it up and went to bed, unconvinced, but too sleepy to know why.

"There won't be any fireworks over in the Pasture because it is sure to rain," Phil had prophesied in the morning; and his prophecy was quite true. At half past seven o'clock, a heavy shower sent everybody indoors; the shower ended in a slow, dreary drizzle which kept everybody there.

Phil and Rob spent an hour in steady labor to keep awake, and only yielded at nine — Phil going to sleep in one arm-chair, and Rob dropping off in another, with his head hanging over the side.

“It’s been *beautiful*,” said Rob, sleepily, as he laid his head upon his pillow.

“That’s so!” said Phil. “I *igmore* it!” which slip of the tongue goes to show that he was sleepier than he knew.





CHAPTER III.

ROB'S BIRTHDAY.

MOST children wonder that their birthdays don't occur oftener during the year, but where three boys are in the family, birthdays and their attendant carnivals are alarmingly frequent.

It came about one day, soon after the glorious Fourth, that in view of Rob's ninth birthday, mamma and Aunt Marion took counsel together. Now everybody who has enjoyed in his own home such advantages of boyish education as only

a resident maiden aunt can afford, knows that no childish mind is too young to receive properly directed ideas of beauty.

Mamma and Aunt Marion were wearied with the seemingly endless rotation of kites, jack-knives, penknives, balls, bats, steam-engines, bows and arrows, bean poppers, picture books—happy thought! no more picture books, but, in their place, pictures!

“Pictures will educate his taste,” pronounced Aunt Marion; and there stood out in her memory two medallions in marble, which hang in a certain gallery of the Vatican; wandering musical bands of little boys, scantily clothed, to be sure, but with sweet earnest faces from which curling hair is tossed lightly back, and with every pretty limb full of boyish motion. Wandering through this gallery when in Rome, Aunt Marion had seen at a glance that

one of these boys was the image of Rob. What more appropriate than to give to Rob photographs of these medallions, and so educate his taste? Moreover, Aunt Marion had seen the photographs down town.

Mamma was delighted. In desperation she had nearly bought a ball, which would have been the tenth ball in the family that summer.

But, "balls are a bad job," Rob said; "no use to get a boss fifty-center and just throw it down a chimney. Besides some big Irish boy always steals everybody's bat."

"Rob, don't say 'boss'; that's slang. And there are plenty of better words than 'big,'" put in Aunt Marion.

The photographs were bought and, prettily framed, were hidden away till such time as a surprise should be in order.

That night Rob announced ; “ t’morrer’s my birthday ’n’ I’m goin’ to have a pocket-book. You promised.”

“ Spell t’morrer, Rob,” suggested Aunt Marion.

“ To *morrow* takes too long,” said Rob, emphatically ; “ but papa’s goin’ to give it to me, birthday.”

“ Learn to speak English, my dear ; ” — from Aunt Marion again — “ there’s a g at the end of going, and what do you mean by ‘ it ’ ? ”

A promise is a promise, decided mamma, and Rob must have the purse, but hereafter we won’t promise.

Next day the photographs, still in their wrappings, were brought forward. Rob looked at the great bundle and knew it at once for anything but a pocket-book. He tried to bear his disappointment manfully but, contrasted with the great bundle be-

fore him, the ideal pocket-book was too much for his fortitude, and his lip trembled.

"I wanted a —" began Rob.

"What's that? what's that?" shouted the other boys, dancing about the bundle.

"Never mind what it is," quivered Rob;
"I don't care about it. I wanted a —"

"Now that is rude," broke in mamma.
"You might have been polite enough to take this present and see if the pocket-book wouldn't come too. You don't even know what these things are; but we will put them away till somebody wants them."

"Give 'em to me! give 'em to me!" cried Phil and Louis together, regardless of what the bundle held.

But the pictures disappeared, their wrappings still unopened, and justice was satisfied.

The family dispersed to wash its face and brush its hair. Rob reappeared speed-

ily, his hair parted diagonally from ear to ear, and two little dripping locks, which had escaped his hasty brush, hanging over his forehead. His face, though still wet in spots, beamed with a virtuous resolution.

“I guess I’ll take ’em, mamma.”

“But it is too late. They are put away, and you are to have only your pocket-book,” said mamma. “What we can’t do for your taste, we will do for your manners.”

Great was the quiet at dinner, and that bit of leaven worked in three minds, but this was by no means the close of Rob’s birthday.

“Down to papa’s office ” he went for his pocket-book, and brought it away triumphantly. On the way home he came to a store where he was allowed to go, occasionally, for pony puzzles and a scrap of conversation, and so dropped in.

Six o'clock came, but no Rob. Half past six. It rained, and a band splashed by to receive a company come from somewhere to visit somebody. Rob has followed the band and doesn't know six o'clock from seven, was decided. The band splashed back again with the company they had "received."

"I 'spect he's drowned," suggested Louis; "or the tramps 've got him. I'll bet it's tramps."

Mamma opened the door and peered out into the rain. Great black clouds were coming up fast, and the night was as dark as midwinter, but moonlight was due, so no street lamps were lighted, a piece of economy based, without regard to thunder showers, upon the habits of the moon.

"Hi — i — iii, mamma! worried about me!" said Rob, springing in at the open door with a subdued whoop. "I've got

a ticket to the p'liceman's ball next Friday, 'n' I'm goin' to invite you. Come out in the dinin'-room and see 'em."

"But there's a g at the end of dining," put in Aunt Marion.

"Splendid knife and pictures, and bottle hair oil, and money in new pocket-book, and Martha Washington, and oh, mamma! sand soap!" rattled on Rob. "*Sand Soap!*"

Little by little it came out that two or three gentlemen of his acquaintance, "told him how old he was, and looked at his new pocket-book, and put some money in it, and gave him the knife and the hair oil, and some court plaster, and a dozen horse-car tickets, just to furnish the new pocket-book, and a really knife, and oh—h—h the sand soap! 'N' I kissed 'em all and thanked 'em," added Rob.

Standing his treasures in a row upon the

end of the table he related the history of each, and gave the hair oil to each member of the family in turn. "But I do *admire* sand soap!" said he gently, standing up the soap against the edge of the cake basket with an air of such deep gratitude that even his mother could not have wished him to receive a present more cordially.

When at last his little tired head was laid upon the pillow, and he had been reminded to make the proper birthday resolutions, he said sleepily, "Oh, I *do* like my sand soap! Wasn't Mr. Hare a thoughtful gentleman to give a boy sand soap?"

And to this day his taste is uncultivated to that degree, that a cake of sand soap and a brown handled jack-knife are more to him than all the Vatican's treasures.



CHAPTER IV.

MIDSUMMER MAYING.

THE next few days went by quite smoothly, and but for the climax that came at the end of the week there might have been no general move into the country.

On the day following the Fourth of July, a military company was formed. At first it had three members, Captain, First Lieutenant, and Drummer. By degrees a Sergeant was added, a Second Lieutenant and a "Captain's Assistant." Several boys

were found who greatly preferred being privates to having no military position at all, and in the course of two hours the company numbered fifteen.

Then it became necessary to reorganize ; for it will never do to chose a lieutenant from among little boys when there are larger boys in the company. Big boy's feelings must be considered. No sooner was this company reorganized than there was found to be in existence another company on another street, also having big boys for officers. It was said that the company down town was entirely ready to fight the company up town.

“Let 'em come on, then !” said the company up town. And they did come on. The up-town company was drawn up on a grass plot. The down-town enemy approached with drums beating and flags flying.

“All right, march!” said the captain of the up-town company.

“All right! come on!” said the captain of the down-town company. “No, hold on a minute! it would be lots more fun to pitch our tents and get ready to fight. You send out spies, and we will.”

Agreed.

One tent was already pitched for family use during the summer, and as a matter of courtesy this was given to the down-town company, while the up-town captain led his troops behind the woodpile.

Either party fortified its position, and a sergeant was sent out under flag of truce, to demand a pledge that the woodpile should not be “flung at the enemy.”

Spies were sent out to creep through the grass under the fence, carrying cap-pistols and pop-guns concealed in their pockets. Great inconvenience was expe-

rienced. Some spies were too small to get over the fence. Others were too large to be hidden in the short grass. Two spies, unaware of each other's presence, became frightened and ran away upon seeing one another's heads pop up behind the fence. A cap-pistol in Rob's pocket went off unexpectedly and betrayed him to the down-town company, who seized him and imprisoned him in a stable near by. It was dark and Rob found it lonely under the wagon where he had been tied. But one of the enemy left in charge of the prisoner, proved too weak to stand against a bribe of peanuts, and creeping in at a window untied the ropes and led Rob in safety to the rear of the barn. From here he easily reached his friends.

A pitched battle had been the consequence of his capture, and the down-town boys, being twenty to fifteen, utterly routed

the up-town boys. A treaty was made, and in fact the two companies were joined, a down-towner being captain, by virtue of having more men and of having just conquered in battle. But the former up-town captain was made "Captain's Assistant," on the political principle that "he had been unfortunate and deserved it."

Next day this new organization drilled. Next day it disbanded. "Too warm to march in July; and the company was too large; and a boy twelve years old can't be captain very well, anyway, 'cause you see he ain't big enough to handle all the fellers," explained Rob.

The military excitement lasted three days. Meantime Phil, taking no share in this, had remained at home reading, save now and then when a game of base ball or leap frog in some street near by had interested him for an hour. On the morning of the fourth

day Rob and Louis had no further interest in military matters and Phil was tired of reading.

"Let's have a fire company," suggested Phil. "There's a cart for hose carriage, and we can get the dinner bell."

"And some real hose to play the water from, and I speak to drive the hose carriage," said Rob.

"Don't let's go to a fire; that's hard work," said Phil. "Let's be a procession. We've come from Lewiston to visit the Machigonnas."

"Whoa, two black horses!" cried Rob, reining in his imaginary steeds. "Don't go so fast! This ain't a fire! it's a procession!"

"I'll be the nigger behind," said Louis, deliberately. "There's always a nigger behind when processions come up from the depot, 'n' he wears a red coat, I b'lieve."

“Rex ‘n’ I’ll be two black horses for you to drive,” put in Jamie.

“There won’t be anybody left for firemen,” said Phil, rather doubtfully. “Where *are* all the boys?”

“See here, sonny!” cried Rob, suddenly, to a boy going by. “What do you call your name?”

The boy looked at him closely for a moment, but seeing only good nature in the face that looked back at him, replied:

“Fred: why?”

“Well, we want a procession of firemen, and I thought if you hadn’t anything to do just now p’aps you’d like to be it, that’s all.”

“Yes, do!” said Phil; “fire companies are fun.”

“‘N’ I’m goin’ to be the nigger behind,” said Louis, marching into position behind him.

"Don't tread on the heels of the company, then," said Fred. "Where's your hose carriage?"

Phil brought the cart and laid in it a great coil of hose. Rob brought the dinner bell. Phil decided to be fire engine. Rex and Jamie drew the cart and Rob drove.

"'Tisn't any more fun than a funeral," said Phil, decidedly, after five minutes. In fact, a plain expression of opinion showed that nobody greatly enjoyed it but the "nigger behind," and he was too small to be allowed an opinion. Fred said good-bye and went away.

A hand-organ came, but it had no monkey nor any tambourine.

"It's too warm to play Presumpscot Park, I s'pose," said Phil; "but if you want to play I'll be Goldsmith Maid and beat 2.15, I'll bet."

"No!" said Rob, briefly.

"I sh'd like to ride," said Phil, "shouldn't you? I sh'd like a balloon. I sh'd like a boat. What can we do? Where are the boys?"

For once Rob could suggest nothing. Military life had not agreed with him and the day was warm. Nobody was energetic. Life seemed hardly worth the having that morning.

"Let's ask mamma, she knows," said Rob, after they had kicked the posts for several minutes in silence. And they went listlessly up stairs to their mother's room.

"Mamma," said Phil, "what can we do? There aren't any boys round this morning, and it's so warm and dusty!"

"Why not play ball?"

"Too warm, and no fellers."

"Fellows," suggested Aunt Marion, sewing by the window.

"Why not snap the whip?"

"That takes a pile of boys."

"Leap-frog, then."

"Too warm, mamma; you don't know how warm it is."

"Wish we knew how to swim," said Rob.

"Wish we had a hoss!" said Phil.

"Do say *horse*, Phil!" implored Aunt Marion.

"Wish we had a boat!" said Rob.

"Wish we had a balloon," said Phil.

"Tell you what I wish," said Rob, slowly. "I wish this whole, whole house was made of ice-cream with enough cake outside to keep it from melting to pieces. 'N' then the beds would be molasses candy, 'n' the chairs would be oranges, 'n' bureaus would be bananas, 'n' pictures 'd be — what would they be, Phil?"

"They'd be cannon and the tables would be gunpowder," replied Phil; "and there'd have to be something for strawberries."

“Books could be those!” said Rob.

“No they couldn’t,” said Phil, decidedly.

“Books would be books. But we sh’d have to have something for base balls and foot balls. I believe I’d rather have it as it is. But I *wish* we *had* — something — to DO!” And he finished up with a yawn of unspeakable idleness.

This was too much for the mother’s practical mind, and she rose energetically.

“We will have some kindlings cut,” she remarked. “When that is done you will enjoy playing.”

This was an amazing turn of affairs, but there was no help for it, and the boys went promptly to the cellar. Axes were furnished them, kindling was put before them, and they were set at work.

An hour later as they burst into her room, mamma looked with delight at the result of her experiment.

"Such a pile of kindlings, mamma! Now can't we play?"

"To be sure; and hands and faces being made ready, away went the boys with a shout.

"Hullo for a game of Three-old-cat!" shouted Phil, walking out of the house on his hands.

Two or three boys "waiting for some more fellers to come," greeted him with enthusiasm.

"Hullo for Scrub! Scrub's better than Three-old-cat!"

"Scrub it is then! One!"

"Two!"

"Three!"

"Go muddler, 'n' work up!" cried Louis.

(What the nigger behind is to a procession the muddler is to a game of ball. He is to fetch and carry for the players.)

"Pitcher!"

“*Catcher!*” And the game went on.

Up stairs, meantime, mamma and Aunt Marion planned a summer in which were pleasantly mingled days at the islands, days in the country near town, and days at home. Aunt Marion was quite clear in her way of thinking as maiden aunts usually are, but doubts would present themselves to mamma.

“There certainly are tramps in the woods near town, and we can’t go to the islands every day for two months.”

“The boys must amuse themselves at home then,” said Aunt Marion, with the air of one disposing easily of any difficulty.

“But there are so few ways for them to amuse themselves without getting into mischief. I don’t wonder that they don’t know what to do with every hour in a long day. The sidewalks are heated, the streets are dusty, and there’s little to play beside

ball, and a few games that they play over and over. I can't always know where they are, and I dread their going to the wharves. By the way, where are they now?" For the noise of the ball playing had stopped.

"Oh, they're somewhere near!" said Aunt Marion, easily. "I believe boys can just as well be taught to take care of themselves as to be looked after all the time. Phil is careful, and generally keeps Rob out of mischief."

"Phil isn't always with him. Rob likes to wander about, and I like to have him, where it is safe, but it isn't safe here." And mamma went down stairs to look for him.

Phil was reading in the parlor. Louis was playing horse with Rex. Nobody knew anything about Rob. They had played ball till everybody was tired, and when Phil came in Rob was on the fence with three other boys.

Mamma was anxious. An hour later she was still more anxious. At six o'clock, Aunt Marion, putting her theories behind her, proposed sending for a policeman to look up Rob.

"No," said mamma. "Rob's father will be at home directly, and he will find him."

I used to send a policeman for Rob, when he was smaller, but he always appeared, smiling, just as the policeman got his instructions, and it grew rather mortifying. Poor Rob never does anything positively bad, so far as I can find out, and he always comes out right; but he is so venturesome, and so ready to go with everybody that asks him, that I am constantly uneasy about him."

"P'aps Charlie Ross has got him," suggested Louis, confusedly.

Mamma sat down by a window trying to read. Footsteps, not Rob's, were heard

approaching, and a strange boy's face appeared at the window.

"Be you Rob Knox's mother?" asked the boy, slowly. "Here's his shoes and stockin's. 'Nother boy's a bringin' 'is hat."

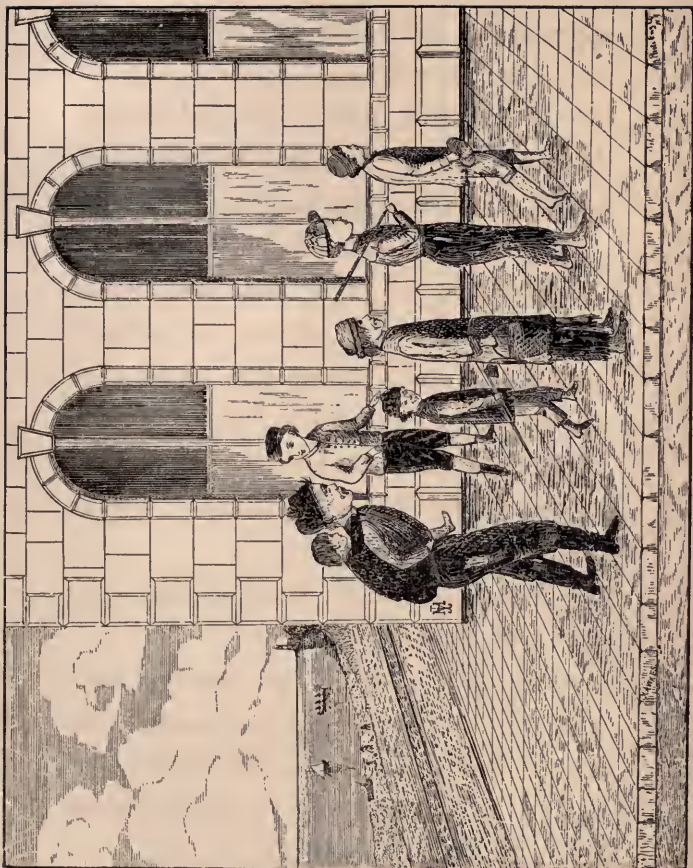
Reaching in at the window he set upon the floor two lumps of mud that looked not in the least like shoes, except for a pair of long dirty lacings that trailed over the carpet. He laid upon these lumps two long strings which the family knew, through the mud, for Rob's stockings. Nobody dared speak at first.

"Where is Rob?" cried at last Phil and Aunt Marion together.

"Oh, he's a comin' on another boy's back; be round here in a minnit," answered the boy. Mamma breathed.

"I'll go and meet him and hear about it," said Phil, starting off.

Aunt Marion began, "Now if ever that child should get home alive—"



Round the corner came a ragged, muddy little procession. First the hat. Then two or three ragamuffins as bodyguard. Then a big boy very ragged, very freckled, with traces of tobacco about his mouth, and with poor dirty little Rob on his back. Rob's arms encircled his neck confidently, and Rob was telling his adventures to Phil, who walked beside him. Phil kept at a safe distance, but Rob's bearer was covered with muddy drippings, and it was quite as well that he wore no collar, for Rob's embrace would have ruined it.

"Been diggin' clams over to the Dump," said Rob, promptly, in reply to the question written on both faces in the doorway. "Boy said he knew where there was some mayflowers over there, but he wasn't a very nice feller, and I got tired of him and went to digging clams for an old woman. I helped her a lot: but after she

went away I "got in," and I don't know how I ever should have got out if it hadn't been for this boy. He was *real* good to me, mamma," said Rob, looking at him gratefully. "He's a *nice* feller, I tell you!"

Little by little these outlines were filled in by the boys looking on. They seemed quite as much pleased with Rob as he with them, but Rob's politeness to them was rather embarrassing.

"Good evening!" he said at length, with great dignity, from out his coating of mud.

"Bye!" said the boys, bashfully; and after a short conversation with the grateful mamma, they went away in high glee.

"Rob's mishaps always end in a triumphal procession," said Aunt Marion. And so they do.

Phil was greatly interested in details

of this expedition, and Louis listened envying and admiring.

"But you're awful muddy," said Louis. "'N' I s'pose p'aps you'll get a whippin'. Anyway you won't have any cake for supper."

Mamma talked long and seriously with Rob that night, and the little fellow seemed greatly impressed.

"I wish I's a good scholar like Phil," moaned Rob. "Then I shouldn't roam about so. I don't see why I don't like to read. I don't see why Phil don't keep me with him. I'm an *awful* boy."

Mamma pulled him out of this slough of despond, and remarked cheerily, "Now you may go down early to-morrow morning and get Mrs. Finn to come and clean these clothes."

"She can't come," said Rob, decidedly. "The baby's dead. They buried it this morning, and I drove the hearse."

Mamma was disheartened at the news of this mode of entertainment, but put off comment, and Rob went placidly to sleep.

Within an hour it was decided, in family council, to go into the country with the boys.





CHAPTER V.

S'PRISING MAMMA.

NEXT morning Louis walked into Aunt Marion's room where she was writing, and laid his hand upon her arm.

"How does my hair look?" he asked.

"*Beautifully,*" replied Aunt Marion; "did you brush it yourself?"

"Yes'm," answered Louis; "did it with my finger nails; it's just as good as a comb and brush. Are you writing to

Grandma that we are going to Uncle Tim's, and then going over to see her?" He moved his hand from her arm as if to encourage the idea.

"Yes," said Aunt Marion.

"I'm quadrillions glad," said Louis, dreamily passing his hand up and down through a column of shining dust which a sunbeam had built up in the room. "Is the sunshine green up there, s'pose? Rob says everything is green up country."

This point was explained, and he said uneasily: "Phil says there *are* uncles in the country that don't have horses."

This was acknowledged to be true.

"Have I got any such uncles as that?" he asked, with a touch of contempt for the possible uncle.

Aunt Marion assured him that he had not.

"Have any of my uncles got a two-seated horse and buggy?"

Yes, there certainly was a two-seated buggy.

"I'm quadrillions glad of *that*," said Louis, again, and he sat down on the floor, while the sunbeam sifted its light into his eyes. The writing went on. Presently Rob burst in at the door.

"Boss news isn't it?" he shouted. "Going next week! Where's Phil? Going down town to have my hair cut! Come, little one, want to go?"

Louis did want to go, and mamma was willing. It gave Rob a sense of responsibility, she thought, to have Louis go with him sometimes, and this was a sense that Rob sadly needed. So Louis' hair was carefully brushed, and his hat set straight upon his head; and Rob was charged over and over again to take good care of Louis, and to come straight home from the barbers.

"Can't I have my hair cut too!" asked Louis.

"Yes, before we go away," said mamma. Rob was waiting outside the door, but it proved that he heard this.

Mamma kissed them both. Rob gathered Louis' four fingers carefully into his own hand, and tucked the thumb in after them as though he would never let them go. Louis resisted. Couldn't a boy most five years old, walk alone he should like to know? This difficulty being settled, they walked off together in great harmony. They stopped once to ride on a velocipede; once to see a man measure some milk; once to examine the fine points of a large dog; once to watch two dancing figures in a toy shop; and once before some top-boots that Louis liked very much, and wanted Rob to buy for him.

"I'd buy 'em in a minute," said Rob,

“but I’ve only got half a dollar, and it’ll take that to get our hair cut.”

“You haven’t got the say of having my hair cut,” objected Louis; “and mamma didn’t say so.”

“That’s so, but I’ll tell you a secret,” said Rob. “I’m goin’ to have it cut to s’prise mamma. She’s fearful busy, and now she’s got all my muddy things to clean ’cause the Finn baby’s dead. Three boys make a lot of work, and I’m goin’ to save mamma some trouble. I’m plenty big enough to take care of you, and she won’t have to come down town to get your hair cut, if we have it done now. We’ll have a shave. It’s fun, you bet, and nobody ever knows whether your hair’s combed for’s much as a month, till it grows out again. I’ll fix it!”

They climbed the stairs, and Rob asked the barber in whose hands he had often

been before, "how much he sh'd ask to cut two clips."

"Fifty cents," said the barber.

"Is that cheap, do you think?" asked Rob, candidly.

"Consider'ble cheap," answered the barber.

"Well, then, we'll take two of 'em," ordered Rob, mounting the chair. "I'll have the first go!"

"Did your mother tell you to come?" asked the barber, doubtfully.

"Don't I always come alone to have my hair cut?" asked Rob, in reply.

So the barber clipped till Rob's head came out smooth and round like a croquet ball. Rob was delighted.

"Come, little boy," said the barber to Louis; "there's others a waitin', and we must finish up this job."

Louis climbed into the chair.

“Give him a good clip now,” said Rob; “it won’t have to be done again so soon;” and the soft hair fell down all over the little pink face. Louis pressed his lips tightly together and shut his eyes.

“Don’t wink now,” cried Rob; “tisn’t safe.”

Louis had not thought of winking till this remark was made. Then he opened his eyes to see why he mustn’t wink.

“Shut ’em!” cried the barber, but it was too late; Louis screamed, and rubbed his eyes furiously with both fists.

Such a commotion! Rob was greatly excited. He caught by one corner, the great cloth that covered Louis from his chin to his feet, and gave it a shake that nearly filled Louis’ mouth with loose flying hairs. Then he dusted him, chair and all, with a great feather brush. Then he caught both his hands and shouted: “You’re the

boss boy not to cry! I'm going to buy you some peanuts with my half dollar! P'aps hadn't I better go for a doctor?" he added, seeing Louis choking.

But the barber seeing the situation at once, had dusted Louis judiciously, and now clearing away the hairs as best he might, washed the little face and put the poor little Louis up again into the high chair. He also put Rob in a chair with injunctions to be quiet.

Not a word had Louis uttered in all this time, nor a cry after that called out by his first astonishment and pain. He rarely cried unless frightened.

"I never knew you's like that, before!" said Rob, admiring him. "Why *didn't* you cry, anyway?"

"S'pose I'm a baby?" said Louis.

"You're a hero!" said the barber. "Tell your mother so, but don't talk now. I shall be done in a minute."

“Mamma said we might all go into the army if we'd go as hero's or something — volunteers, I believe it was,” said Rob, in no way silenced. “Mamma'll be so glad Louis is goin' to be one. Guess I shall buy you some bananas with my half dollar, Louis; they're better than peanuts. How much is the hair going to be though?” he asked, brought to his feet by the thought that he could not spend his half-dollar twice.

“Half a dollar,” said the barber again.

“Sure enough!” said Rob, sadly. “Then I ain't got any half dollar to spend.”

“'Twasn't to spend, anyway,” said the practical Louis. “It was mamma's to cut the hair with.”

“Sure enough!” said Rob, again, “and she told me to bring back the change.”

“There isn't any change,” said the barber.

"Oh, well, she thought there would be," said Rob. "I'm havin' Louis' hair cut to s'prise her, and save her the trouble of coming down. She don't know 'bout that."

The barber's hand stopped short in the midst of a flourish with his brush. "What do you mean, sir?" he asked. Rob explained.

"Well, now," said the barber, "are you going to tell her about it? going to tell her the truth about it?"

"Well, I *guess* so!" said Rob, indignantly; "what do you s'pose I'm going to tell her. Besides, she'll be delighted," he added a little doubtfully, looking at Louis' smooth shaven head. "It is a close clip, though, ain't it?"

Louis understood quite as well as Rob, the expenditure of the half dollar, and the consequent loss of the peanuts, so he said nothing when Rob gave up the bit of scrip

which the little fellows had spent several times in imagination. The great blue eyes followed it closely, however, and Louis drew a long breath as the barber's fingers closed over it. But lo! the barber gave him a crisp new "ten cent scrap," with which to buy peanuts.

"Half of it is for you," he said to Rob. "I guess you'll do this time, but you'd better not surprise your mother too often. Most folks don't like surprises."

The scrip was soon spent, and the paper bag of peanuts emptied its contents into two little pockets. The two boys sauntered up the street happy in their feast, but Louis' hat slipped about a good deal as he walked.

"Guess it must be Phil's; you've got the wrong hat for certain. Mine's too big, too!" Rob discovered this suddenly. "But it isn't so bad as yours. Mamma'll fix 'em."

"Don't have peanuts much up country," said Rob, moving on and cracking a large nut; "but there's lots of other things. There's boss green apples—but mamma don't let us eat 'em; and there's choke cherries—pucker your mouth all up; and there's brakes—pull 'em up and the roots are splendid."

"What else?" said Louis, as Rob paused.

"Oh, we go fishing down in the brook by grandma's house. You can't go, you'll drown if you do; but you can go camping out with us. We're going to have a bear camp this summer and trap bears."

"Bears!" repeated Louis, in alarm. "Are you big enough?"

"Oh, yes!" said Rob, "plenty big enough; and Phil is bigger."

"Have you got a gun?"

"No; but we're going to ask papa to buy us one."

"Got a tent?"

"No; but we're going to ask him to buy us a tent too."

"I'll bet he won't!"

"I'll bet he will!"

"Shall you take a man with you?"

"Pooh, no indeed!"

"Take papa's sword?"

"P'aps so; I guess we'd better."

"'Ll mamma go?"

"No; but we're going to camp on Grey mountain, right near the house, and she'd hear us if anything happened. We sh'd holler, you know."

"Well, I shall stay with mamma," said Louis, decidedly.

"Yes I would; you're pretty small."

Great cracking of peanuts.

"Did ever you *see* a bear?" asked Louis, after sometime.

"Not a live one. There's a stuffed one down town."

"A stuffed bear ain't anything."

"Oh, yes, it's a good chance to look at 'em, and make up your mind where you'll hit when there's a live one to kill."

Another pause and cracking of peanuts.

"It'll be awful lonesome, Rob."

"Well—I know it; but you see we shall go right to sleep."

"Rob, it'll be awful dark before you do go to sleep."

"Well—I know it! P'aps we shan't go up there to sleep! P'aps we shall just go and spend the day after all! We don't know *certain* as there are any bears. And you know we haven't got any gun—nor any tent. Hullo! there's a boy 't' goes to my school! He's going to stop and speak to us a minute. He's a real big boy."

So they stopped. Rob and his acquaintance, whose name he did not know, entered into conversation. The-boy-'t-goes-to-

Rob's-school said Rob hadn't darst to vorlt that post, he'd bet.

Rob vaulted that post, and all the posts in the vicinity.

"Bet you hadn't darst to vorlt that fence there," said the boy, sure that this was quite too much to be attempted.

Rob looked at Louis. "Will you wait here till I come back, Louis?" he asked. Then his conscience smote him. "I can't leave him," he said to the boy; "he's such a little feller! 'N' he's my brother."

"Hoh-h-h! stumped yer; knew I could! staggered yer; knew I had! hadn't darst to after all; knew yer hadn't!" cried the nice boy.

This was more than Rob could endure.

"*Will* you stay here till I come back, Louis?" he asked again, putting his hand on Louis' shoulder assuringly. "I'll give you all the peanuts I've got left, and I

shan't be gone a minute. Sit right here," —standing Louis with his back against a lamp post on the corner — "and watch me go over the fence."

Louis sat down on the curbstone, and Rob went over the fence at a leap. The nice boy caught the peanuts and ran away. He was too large for Louis to think of following him, but he decided, "Rob'll fix him," and went on eating the peanuts from his pockets, his own original share. Rob did not appear.

"He's 'comin' round another way," thought Louis. But Rob did not come.

Nobody noticed the little fellow sitting quietly under the lamp post; but his peanuts were soon gone, and he mourned for the lost handful. The sun grew warm, and still Rob didn't come. "Where is he?" thought Louis; "why *don't* he come?"

Louis began to draw long breaths, now and then. He rose to his feet and stood on tiptoe, but he could see nothing. He went up to the fence over which Rob had jumped so easily, and stood on tiptoe trying to look over. His forehead came just to a knothole, and his hat fell off over and over again. There was nothing to stand on that would bring his eyes up to the knothole, and poor Louis felt himself to be so little! Then he lifted up his voice and called, "Rob — *bie!*" No answer. "Rob! *Rob!* *Rob — bie!*"

Louis' voice was loud and full, but there came no reply. If Rob could only have seen the little startled face, with its flushed cheeks and great, solemn, blue eyes!

"What is the matter, little boy?" asked a gentleman going by.

"Do you see any boy over in that place?" asked Louis, steadying his voice. "He said he'd be back in a minute."

"Yes," said the gentleman; "there are several boys playing ball over by the fence."

"Is any of 'em Rob?"

"Who is Rob?"

"He's my brother; he said he'd be back in a minute."

"Well, there's a boy looking on to see the others play. That is Rob, probably. I guess he will be back in a minute." And the gentleman went on.

"I wish I could see 'em play!" said Louis to himself, when he was alone again. "'N' the sun's so hot! Ro-o-o-bie!" he called again. No answer. Louis sat down under the fence and waited again.

"I s'pose he's forgot me," he thought sadly, "'n' I don't know the way home."

The brave little face had shown no signs of tears as yet, but now the little heart swelled and swelled, and grew so heavy

that Louis felt sure that the lump in his bosom was large enough to burst.

“I s'pose it's peanuts,” he thought deliberately. “I'll bet I'm going to die, I've eaten so many. I sh'd think mamma'd come!” Then he drew his knees close up to his face, put the back of his hands on his knees, put his face down in the little dirty hands, and sobbed great quick, choking sobs.

“Why, Louis, what's the matter? Where's Rob?” Phil's quick step came near, Phil's hands raised Louis' head, and Phil's eyes smiled into Louis'.

“Rob forgot,” answered Louis, brightening from the roots of his shaven hair to the tip of his chin; “'n' I didn't know the way home.” Phil put his hat straight, wiped his eyes, brushed off the peanut shells, and smoothed him out generally.

“Where did Rob leave you?”

"Oh, right here; I've been here ever since. He's gone over the fence a minute; he'll be right back. Let's go home now, quick."

"No, we must have Rob first. I'll go after him. Afraid to stay here till I come back?"

"Oh, no!" said Louis, in great surprise; "I shouldn't wonder if I was big enough to go bear hunting with you and Rob."

Down he sat again under the fence. "*He'll* come back; *he* always does," said Louis, with significant emphasis; and he did come back at once with dejected Rob in tow.

"I didn't know it had been any time," said Rob. "I vaulted the fence to let a boy 't goes to our school know 't I could. He said I couldn't, 'n' when I got over there some fellers were playing ball, so I just waited a minute. I forgot 'bout Louis."

Dinner was waiting when they reached home, but an investigation was promptly commenced, and the smallest details came out.

Mamma never told anybody but Rob, quite all she thought about Louis's shaven head.

"Papa says it looks like a pig skin ball," sobbed Rob, rubbing his hand over Louis' head that night, when they were snugly laid away in bed; "'n' I'm awful sorry; 's true 's I live I only meant to save you the trouble of going down town, you know. I'm glad we're goin' up country; I'm always a good boy up there."





CHAPTER VI.

HELPING PACK.

 HE birds never sang so sweetly as on that morning when the boys went into the country, and the sun never shone so brightly.

The packing was done. There were guns and harnesses and balls and soldier things, and there was a bat ; not because any of these things would be especially needed but because the boys were anxious to take them, and mamma thought it a harmless indulgence.

The only trouble from them was, in pack-

ing, the night before, when all the boys must help. A nice little box of collars and neckties was turned wholly upside down by the insertion of a top and a base ball. The mark of a gun was left upon a fresh muslin dress. A paper boat was packed and unpacked, and fitted into one corner after another till there seemed to be dozens of paper boats exactly alike. The trunks bristled with cap pistols. If mamma ventured to turn her back upon the scene for a moment, a brilliant idea seized one of the three boys as to the packing of some piece of personal property. Conveyed to the others, this idea was no sooner understood than carried out, resulting in a degree of confusion that passed the imagination of even Aunt Marion.

Aunt Marion hovered about here and there, discouraged in her efforts to help

by the fact that whatever she put down was speedily taken up and put somewhere else, by one of the three little people who were also trying to help.

There was great inquiry after Louis' red stockings. They must have got into the wash by mistake, mamma said.

"No," persisted Amy, the servant girl, quite as accurate in her sphere of knowledge as the greatest of mathematicians in his; "she had seen the stockings lying about after the wash was all gathered up. But Louis had had most all his things packing them one time and another."

The trunks were searched for the red stockings. Behind bureaus, under beds, up stairs and down stairs they looked, but no red stockings. Louis' coats and vests and trowsers were shaken, and even their pockets were overhauled, but nothing came of it.

“He’s had his knapsack,” said Amy
“and he says to me, ‘I ain’t goin’ up
country, Amy, after all; — I’m goin’ to
Boston, to the battle of Lookout Mountain.
So now, very likely, he’s got the stockings
in his knapsack.”

As usual, Amy was right. In the little
leather knapsack, hidden away under a
scarlet cap and gay épaulets, lay the miss-
ing stockings, folded, and wrapped in a
tiny blue vest.

“Now,” said mamma, decidedly, “here
is the end of this. I shall carry away all
the paper boats and lassoes in the house,
and nothing that we need to use or to
wear.”

So Aunt Marion swept all the boys to
bed with alluring promises for the morn-
ing, while mamma examined the packing,
and thinned out various things that could
never be missed. Her sympathetic fingers,

however, left much that Aunt Marion would have tossed aside. "He would be so disappointed not to find this;" or, "he plays so often with that," was her thought; till, after all her careful supervision, the array of picture-books, sticks and strings, and bits of paper and tin and wood in that baggage would have unsettled the mind of any spinster who had chanced upon one of the trunks by mistake.

But, as I said, the sunniest of mornings had come, and the trunks, packed and locked and strapped, stood at the head of the stairs. The boys rode on horseback upon them, and played steamboat and horse-car and steam cars with them, putting on brakes, and letting off steam, and shouting out stations from Conway to New Orleans.

Excitements were by no means rare in this lively household, but unless we except Christmas Day and the Fourth of July,

this was far the most exciting day of the year.

It was quite impossible to dress without half a dozen boys of different sizes, to assist at the toilet. Phil, Rob and Louis, had each his particular friends who must hear of the proposed summer doings, and there seemed to have been nothing to tell until this morning. Bear-hunting, kite-flying, haying, fishing, berrying—all were discussed as much in detail as excitement would allow. All the new suits had been looked over and commented upon, by all the boys within easy distance. Nearly all the boys in the street had been up stairs to “to see the trunks,” though why they should want to see them, they themselves would have been puzzled to say. Louis, Carl, Rex and Jamie, marched up stairs in a line, and walked several times around the trunks without saying a word. To

have seen their intense interest you would have supposed all a boy's ideal "up country" to be contained in those trunks — sunny sweet air, and brooks, and fish, and bears, and dirt, and shovels.

They tugged at the straps, and "lifted," separately and all together, and produced no more effect than birds pecking at a tree.

Phil's fishing pole stood in a corner, and each of the four "lifted" that. Rob's pole stood in another corner, and each of the four lifted that. This was done silently for the most part, till they reached Rob's fishing pole, when Rex asked:

"Yis is Wob's pole, ain't it?"

"Yes, why?"

"Oh, 'tause it's bwoten, I knew it was his."

"Yes, but when his things are broken he uses Phil's, you know."

“Is yat Wobb’s fissin basket, too?” asked Rex, looking into the basket as if uncertain what he might find there.

“Yes, Rob’s is broken, but he’ll use Phil’s basket just the same.” This had come to be an established fact in the family arrangements.

The four youngsters were sensible that something was about to happen, and could not set themselves at play as usual; so they roamed through the house from room to room, taking whatever offered in the way of amusement.

“Going to take the birds?” asked Jamie, stopping before the cage and putting his fingers between its wires.

No, the birds weren’t going. Sixteen little fingers crooked all at once between the wires set the birds in a flutter.

Thirty-two fingers crooked between the wires drove the birds to the very top of

the cage for shelter, and there was no further entertainment to be had out of this.

"Funny, ain't yey?" said Rex; and the procession moved.

"See my garden!" suggested Louis, holding to the window sill and leaning far out to look at the sandy yard whose every inch the other three knew as well as he did. Perhaps in the light of going up country, it might have gained something of beauty. "There's billions of beans in my garden, I s'pose."

"No tind of a darden," said Rex, critically; but he, too, caught at the window sill, pulled himself up till he stood upon tiptoe on the mopboards, and leaned far out.

So did Jamie.

So did Carl.

The merciful providence that watches

over boys, kept them from falling out till Aunt Marion, sure from the silence that something was wrong, and coming to look for them, pulled them in one by one without ceremony.

“Come in my room and play awhile,” proposed Aunt Marion, appalled by the thought of what might happen if they should be left to themselves, in their present lawless state of mind.

They took possession of Aunt Marion’s room, accordingly; played fight with her hair brush and crimping-pins; tried on her hat; made a tent with her umbrella; played horse with her shawl strap; built a fort with her pillows; played George Washington with her riding hat and feather; set up a boot and shoe store in the closet; and were about to collect the vases from her mantel to play “old clo’es man” with. But at this point Aunt Marion rebelled,

and dismissed them all with a "tip" of perfumery on each wee pocket-handkerchief.

"Now we can go and smell it all out," said Louis, contentedly, as the door shut behind them.

Mamma's room came next.

"No fun here: everything's packed!" they decided, after making the tour of the room, and the little brigands marched through the hall again.

"Bet a fish-hook you fellers can't slide down the banisters!" cried Rob, appearing from somewhere.

Mamma heard this suggestion, and started at once to interfere; but the four, as one boy, had scrambled to the banisters, and down they went in quick succession.

One — two — three! Rob screamed with delight, and all the four shouted in reply, but mamma, foreseeing the catastrophe,

reached the foot of the stairs just as Carl, fourth in the great slide, came flying over the heads of the others, and struck the floor with a dull thud.

The three first comers sat perfectly still on the banisters, while mamma picked up the screaming Carl, and carried him into the dining-room.

Rob sat down on the upper stair in horror, with his hat in his hands.

"Maybe he's dead, you know," he said at last, when the sharp screams ceased. "You ought to've gone slower. I'd no idea you'd do it anyway. You mustn't take everything in earnest, so, and do all that anybody asks you to!"

But there proved to be no serious injury, and Carl, with a plaster on his forehead, became the hero of the hour.

To Aunt Marion's great relief, mamma sent them all out of doors, and they con-

soled themselves with a game of marbles, a game of ball, a military funeral, a circus, a regatta with gate posts for yachts and Rob as commodore, and a single-scutt race in which everybody sat on the sidewalk and scutted with his hands.

“You bet I’ll go to college when I’m a man,” said Rob, with ardor, as they scutted, “and I’m going to the one with the biggest base ball club and the most boats.”

The four small boys agreed to this plan of life, but the morning’s entertainment was cut short by the taking off of Rob and Louis to be washed and brushed. This being accomplished, Rob and Louis were kept in position till a carriage came, when the entire family disappeared in a cloud of dust amid shouts of “Good bye!” “Hurrah for up country!” “Bring us a bear!” &c.

Before seven o'clock that night every nook of a green yard under the locust trees, "up country," had been visited; every hen and chicken had been interviewed; every crank in every machine had been turned; and every corner of every loft, shed, stall, sty, and haymow had been faithfully explored. No stone was left unturned to discover whatsoever change had taken place since the boys' last visit.

Before eight o'clock Rob and Louis were dreaming of scrambles and climbs past and to come. Phil and his cousin Louise, old enough to stay up awhile and enough alike to be thoroughly comfortable together, sat on the broad stone doorsteps, talking in a half grown-up way, of games and books and picnics.

"It's three weeks since school closed," said Phil, "but vacation has just begun."



CHAPTER VII.

SUMMER DAYS.

 TWO weeks went by. An actual "deluge of summer" was poured about the boys.

Phil fished; bathed in the clear Saco; rode on great swaying loads of sweet-smelling hay, and laughed at Aunt Marion's warning of "snakes in it;" played croquet under the locusts with Louise; whistled when she practised her music lessons; climbed no end of trees; and swung in the broad sunny hammock, or lay on the

grass reading history, mythology, or fairy stories.

Phil cared little for companionship other than Rob's, and Rob cared little for reading; so after playing together for half a day they usually separated, Rob to seek green fields and pastures new, Phil to go to his hammock and book.

Rob did everything that Phil did and more, in the way of exercise; and when Phil began his reading and dozing and swinging, Rob went down in the fields again to spread hay, build dams in the brook and float his boat, tarn somersets, and hunt bears or woodchucks, as he thought best. He had an extensive acquaintance among the farmers in all directions, and was constantly perched on some wagon or cart, by the side of "a man he knew," who seemingly enjoyed the intercourse as much as Rob did.

Phil looked doubtfully upon Rob's very general friendships, and sometimes reasoned with him, but Rob's invariable reply, "Oh, he's all right! first rate feller," was not to be disproved.

"There's no danger," said uncle Tim; "the men all know where he belongs, and they are sure to bring him back."

"But he is learning to talk so carelessly," said Aunt Marion. "I noticed this morning that he said 'we wasn't,' and 'hain't'."

However, errors in English were more easily corrected than certain other errors, mamma thought; so Rob ran and roamed and rode to his heart's content, and there beamed in his face and looked out at his eyes a placid content with these careless, easy days, that was charming to see.

"You know, mamma," explained Rob, one day during the hair-brushing process, "there's no p'licemen here to say you

shan't ride your velocipede on the sidewalk, and shan't play football in the street, and shan't stay here and shan't go there. You don't know how hard cheesits are on fellers. Up here, a man don't care whether you're on his ground or not so long as you don't tread down his grass and tear up things."

"But why aren't you contented to stay on uncle Tim's farm?" asked mamma, to whom this love of roaming was a source of uneasiness.

"Well, it *is* boss," said Rob, cheerily, "but it's bossier to go exactly where you want to, you know. I wish they didn't have fences up here, it seems *shut in* for up country. There aren't any fences at sea, and you're never shut up. I guess I shall go to sea when I'm a man—but I sh'd be awful lonesome without you, mamma!"

More and more distressed at poor Rob's inborn love of freedom, mamma explained that being shut up in a ship is worse than being shut up in a broad green field, and there are severer restraints for sailors than policemen impose upon Rob and his kind ; but Rob knew that this was a woman's view of the case.

"But when you are a man," said mamma, smoothing the little round white head, "if you want more than anything else to go to sea, you may go ; because papa and mamma think it best for boys to do whatever they want most to do, when they are old enough to be quite sure of what they want."

"All right !" said Rob, with a beaming smile ; "then I shan't have to run away to sea, like the boys in the Sabbath school book Phil read to me last Sunday. P'aps I shan't go to sea, anyway, you know," he

added, with a desire to make everything agreeable, and with a clear perception that the idea wasn't so amusing to his mother as to him. "But you *bet* I love *you*, mamma!"

Louis enjoyed things in his own way—which was an odd mixture of Phil's way and Rob's way—quite as much as the older boys.

He entertained himself for an hour or two every morning, by helping drive the cows to pasture, feed the pigs and chickens, and water the horse. Then somebody going somewhere took him to ride. Then he dug a garden, sometimes with a shovel, sometimes with a teaspoon, and once with the pie-knife. He walked about among the tall growing corn; played with the kittens; "picked" vegetables for dinner; "husked" the peas; "shelled" the strawberries; looked after things in the kitchen;

and finally went down in the field to "help Rob," and to ride upon the last load of hay before noon.

Besides, there were dams in the brook to be looked after; and eggs to be hunted; and chickens need constant care.

In one way and another, first and last, Louis had a vast deal of trouble with those hens and chickens.

The hens would make their nests on heights that he could never reach, and indeed, when at last he found two eggs within easy distance he broke them both with a stick, "'cause who'd ever eat eggs laid in a dirty ash barrel?"

The chickens, too, had notions of their own, and I fancy that between Louis and them were many struggles that never reached the public ear.

One afternoon Louis came with a dead chicken in a starch box, and invited his

mother to a funeral. The circumstances of the "accident" being inquired into, it was found that Louis thought that the chicken looked warm and tired, and he was sure that she "needed a nap for rest." He tried to make 'er roost and she wouldn't. He had to use a stick, and even then she wouldn't roost, and wouldn't do anything but piep. And the first thing Louis knew, the chicken "left off her voice," and didn't so much as piep. The first thing he knew after that, the chicken was dead, Aunt Anna said, and she said he might have a funeral.

From that time Aunt Anna took the management of the chickens out of Louis' hands, and he amused himself elsewhere.

When he had taken care of his own affairs, and was tired of "helping Rob," he went round to the green yard under the locust trees, and crept into the ham-

mock with Phil, while Phil told him about the Battle of Lookout Mountain; Latona and the Frogs; or the "Dogs with Eyes as big as Teacups, Eyes big as Mill-Wheels, and Eyes big as Round Towers."

Sometimes Rob joined them, but usually he was too busy.

One night, however, he flung himself over the fence, during one of these hours of story-telling, and marching up to the hammock said excitedly,

"Phil, I know a boy out here 't says you're a cocoon."

"A *what?*" said Phil.

"Well, I don't know's it was a cocoon! I guess 'twas a bookworm. He says you're a bookworm!"

Phil laughed.

"Aint you mad?" roared Rob, all in a fury.

"No," said Phil, with provoking cool-

ness; "that's no harm. I don't care what he says."

Rob's face flamed, and he fairly danced with anger and amazement at Phil's indifference.

"Well, I'm mad, 'n' I'm goin' to lick 'im *now*!" he cried, hurrying away. "I can do it with one hand!"

"Oh yes, do it! do it!" cried Louis, in high glee.

Phil started to interfere, but from a window overlooking the yard, called the voice that always calls at a crisis.

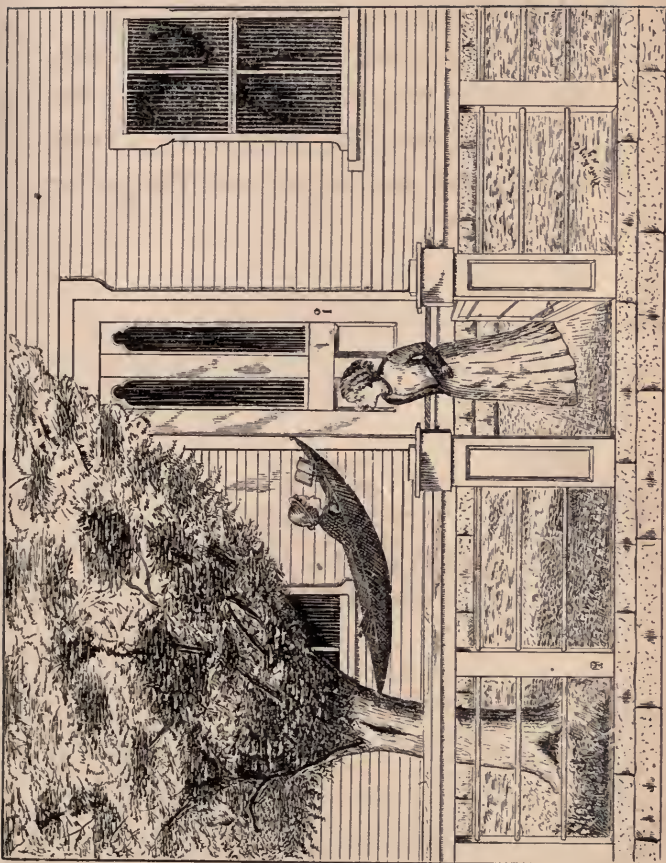
"She always sees *everything*," muttered Rob, but he turned and went slowly up to the great cool room where his mother sat sewing. Here the difference between a bookworm and a cocoon was made clear to his mind and his anger was cooled.

That night Rob was found lying in the hammock, face down, spelling out the long words in a "History of the World."

"Are you looking for anything, Rob?" asked his mother, in surprise.

"No'm, nothing special," replied Rob, too busy to raise his eyes; "but I'm tired of playing, and I'm going to be a book-worm. I've just begun, and I'm getting on bossly."







CHAPTER VII.

PRODIGIES, FAIRIES, AND A ZOOLOGICAL MATINEE.

 O begin with, the advertisement was thrilling.

“Not only the largest, best, most instructive, amusing, diversified, and interesting, but certainly by far the most respectably conducted and universally popular first class amusement now before the public. Entirely unexceptionable and such as heads of the most respectable families, and seminaries for youth, will not hesitate

to encourage those under their charge to attend."

"Elephants, Lions, Camels, Zebras, Bears, Birds, Hyenas, and a wilderness of Monkeys including a Ring-tailer and a full grown Chimpanzee!"

"A noble Signor, who is the Head-centre of the Bareback Champion Riders in all Christendom, and his Infantile Prodigy!"

"A trained horse named General Grant!"

"Cleopatra, the largest and most intelligent living elephant!"

"The menagerie only to be seen at its best in the Zoological Matinee!"

"The only living Bless-Bok, an Orang-Outang, and a Man-Monkey!" which last named animal I'm sure we needn't go to the circus to see.

All these things were to be seen under two colossal tents, and the public was as-

sured that the canvas had been overflowing everywhere with literary men, clergymen, artisans, shopkeepers and laborers — all with their respectable and delighted families. Brilliant bills were posted everywhere and extraordinary pictures of blood-curdling performances and unheard-of animals set Phil, Rob and Louis, in a fever of excitement.

I suppose there's not a boy living who would not crave the sight of a full grown Chimpanzee, or whose heart would not leap with joy at the name of the only living Bless-Bok, and the Grand-Quadruple-Combination-Show and Asiatic Caravan.

At all events, these boys were so moved by the words of the advertisement that books, hammock, hens and chickens, and the beautiful Intervale fields were all deserted for twenty-four hours.

At the end of that time Aunt Marion

had promised to take Louise and the boys to this great moral show. Sorry to tell, on the morning of circus day, a cloud came down from the near mountains and brought with it a shower that threatened to spoil the track and the boys' fun generally.

But the heaviest showers have an end, and soon after twelve o'clock the sun was shining brightly, exactly as the newspaper had foretold; and Aunt Marion with her very much delighted and somewhat respectable family, marched over the hills and far away, to the music of the band.

The two colossal tents gleamed and creaked, and lifted waving flags high in air. A man, in a very high cart, was selling tickets, and a great many small boys, flat upon the wet grass, were trying to look in under the edge of the tent.

But the matter of the greatest interest so far, was the display of art which flapped

in the wind on a smaller tent, and invited to the side shows.

Chief among these was a life size picture of a fat boy in blue with a red hat and white feather, closely stared at by a woman, very much larger than life, dressed in green and purple, and leading by the hand a yellow haired child in scarlet dress and blue gloves.

There was another piece of coloring representing a Circassian lady, in pink and green, sitting upon a pink and green carpet and having her hair in a most astonishing condition intended to show that she was a curiosity.

There were pictures of fiery serpents, wild horses, dogs in mid-air, and more things than I can tell. These pictures were hung loosely by four corners, and when partly filled by the wind, the effect was astonishing.

With a sigh of regret and a backward glance toward these things of beauty, the children went on to the "truly circus." Passing through the door of one of the colossal tents, and being with great difficulty seated in a row, their eyes grew round with wonder, and silence fell upon them.

The ring-master in black dress coat trimmed with red velvet and spangles, seemed part methodist minister and part dancing master.

The clown wore spangled green and gold and cracked his jokes while the ring-master cracked his whip.

A beautiful white horse cantered gently around the ring, hanging his head in shame, Aunt Marion said, at being in such company.

The people laughed, babies cried, boys who didn't come in families howled, and

the horse hung his head all the time. Phil said that his head was tied down.

The clown went out under the curtain, but there came other clowns, dressed in calico, and therefore exceedingly funny; more jokes; more laughing and crying; more noise from the boys; and these clowns also went out under the curtain.

When they went out, the prettiest pony in the world came in, and even Aunt Marion was delighted.

Then followed still another clown arrayed in a combination of red, blue, yellow, and black, with the same horrible spangles and equally horrible jokes; whips; laughter; cries; howls; and, at last, the blessed curtain that covers all.

Then a girl in pink and blue tarletan and spangles, who leaps upon the back of her horse with a smile that is enchanting. The horse moves around the ring to

the time of slow music, and Phil says the girl looks like a fairy.

But the players quicken the music, and the girl is transformed. Broad banners are brought, and when the horse gallops under them the woman flies over them. Paper covered hoops are brought, and she plunges headlong through the paper and comes down upon the horse's back again, without disturbing the rose in her hair.

"Aunt Marion," said Rob, never moving his eyes from the performance, "I'll bet your hair'd come down if you should try that."

"She never would try it," said Phil, with dignity.

"Well, she couldn't do it if she *should* try!" persisted Rob.

"No, she'd hurt herself," said Louis, laying his hand protectingly on Aunt Marion's arm.

The bells in the saddle jingle, the spangles glitter, the music grows louder and louder, the great white horse goes faster and faster, till at last the horse dashes out under the curtain, and the band stops with a crash.

The question in Louis' mind is, whether the horse and the woman stop on the other side of the curtain, or whether they still fly on over banners and through hoops, over houses and trees and mountains, higher and higher till they disappear in the clouds.

The next "act" proved to Rob the gratifying fact that a man may stand on his head and at the same time eat his dinner by means of a fork fastened to his left foot. Aunt Marion couldn't think this desirable, but Phil and Rob liked it greatly.

Next the trapeze. Louise thought it "perfectly horrid," but the boys watched

every motion, and Phil and Rob decided between themselves that there was a first rate chance for two trapeze bars out in uncle Tim's barn. If this shouldn't be agreeable to uncle Tim, the bars could be put among the locust trees, and in going from one bar to the other it might be possible to touch the hammock in passing, come up with a flying leap and hang by your feet to the other bar.

From behind the dingy red curtain that hid the unoccupied performers, there came out just before the close of the trapeze act, a little woman in a faded shawl and shabby hat, sitting down among the musicians and looking back at the curtain. Aunt Marion noticed her for her evident eagerness and anxiety, and when the Infantile Prodigy ran with his father into the ring, it was clear that he was *her* Prodigy.

Round and round the ring they went,

the man and the boy, in every conceivable position, each more dangerous than the last, and the woman's eyes never once turned from the baby-faced boy. People, music, spangles, and gaudy, silly clown were nothing to her; she had no thought for anything but the tiny figure poised in air far above the heads of the people.

Aunt Marion and Louise were very glad and the boys very sorry, when the mother, wrapping the Prodigy in her own old shawl, led him behind the curtain.

An agreeable diversion was the entrance of the elephant — the peerless Cleopatra.

“Is it a pincushion, or is it a truly elephant?” asked Louis, with the fancy articles of the last church fair uppermost in his mind. Phil commented upon her ears like that kind of seaweed known as “devil's apron,” and Rob was much surprised by her voice as heard in a series of sharp sounds which only a boy could rival.

As our party entered the second colossal tent where the Zoological Matinee was held, ominous growls and snarls were heard. The animals were arranged in cages around the tent, and in the centre of the great circle thus formed, was a table covered with oranges, candies, cakes, and lemonade. The lemonade, to Louis' great confusion, was being "given away at five cents a glass." Louis asked anxiously if the candy was being given away too, and was made happy by a great square of molasses candy which he put, in nearly equal parts, in his mouth, on his face, and on his clothes.

The hyena snarled ; the polar bear panted horribly ; the panther was savage ; the zebra was placid ; the monkeys chattered and grinned ; the camels stretched their necks incredibly ; and the lion behaved as he ought, shaking his head and mane in a way that was calculated to terrify and delight all small boys.

Rob thought that the rhinoceros looked like "his last winter's overcoat when the moths got in it;" and Louis declared that the "hipopotamus was a stuffed animal," until the great creature suddenly opened his mouth and stopped all doubts.

The side shows were gone through in course. The Circassian girl looked like a doll on an electric battery. The mammoth boy had a babyish expression, and no end of dimples.

"*Is he real?*" asked Louis, convinced that all these things were too good to be true.

"Oh, yes!" said the fat boy in a puffy voice; "I am — *real* real!" and reaching out a flabby hand laid it upon Louis' head so that the great fingers hung down all over the little candy stained face.

Phil strode close to Louis' side, and Rob caught at his sleeve, both clearly fearing

that the fat boy would lift him from the ground; but that great person only shook all over like a mould of jelly, and Louis was even more pleased than when the hippopotamus opened his mouth in his honor.

There were yet to be seen the wild horses and their tamer; and after the attentions that Louis had received from the show in general, he was ready for anything that could happen in this tent.

But the wild horses were a disappointment. They had been tamed so many times that day that they drooped under it at last. Their tamer, however, was all that could be desired. He was mild and gentle, to be sure, and tall, with very long face, long curls, long teeth which his lips entirely failed to cover, and a very long drawl when he spoke. But he was gayly dressed in a buckskin suit embroidered with beads, Indian moccasins, and a white beaver hat,

with a feather on one side. His whip was every inch of six feet in length, and there was a sword by his side. It must have been a very ill-natured boy that would not have been pleased by this dress.

The horses were tamed three times while the respectable family hung over the railing of the enclosure, and Rob insisted upon going inside "to see if *he* couldn't tame 'em."

But Aunt Marion, anxious for a change of scene, promised a trip upon the backs of the wooden flying horses outside.

These horses, therefore, were duly mounted, but after two successful circles had been made, Rob, in his efforts to "hurry 'em up a little, 'cause Aunt Marion's waiting," fell off his horse. This frightened Louis, and in trying to look over his shoulder he also fell off.

All the horses were stopped at this, and

Rob was found unhurt, but Louis had bruised his head and cut his hand. Aunt Marion bound up the wounds, and at last the party made the best of its way home, tired, hungry, and by that time several degrees removed from respectability.

"I don't believe that there was *one* thing in *any* tent, that we didn't see," said, Phil, rousing himself, when almost asleep, to express his satisfaction once more.

"No, not one," answered Rob, drowsily, and *wasn't* it boss?"

"'N' wasn't the fat boy fearfully nice?" asked Louis, from the crib. "I'm acquainted with him, I'll bet a trillion."

"Phil," — a few minutes later — "don't you — believe — we c'n make — a — c'lossal — tent — t'morrow?"

But there was no answer, and Rob would not have heard it if there had been.



CHAPTER IX.

PUBLIC SPEAKING.

HERE'S going to be the last day of school this morning," said Rob, to his mother, one day ; "and Phil and I are invited. Can we go?"

"I'm invited, too," I s'pose," said Louis.

"No, she didn't say anything about you. But I guess you can go, for there aint any tickets, and you don't have to pay to go in."

"Don't say *aint*, Rob!" begged Aunt Marion.

"Who invited you?" asked the mother.

"The teacher, mamma. I don't know her name, but I'm acquainted with her. She speaks to me every morning when she goes by, and always calls me Robert — very partic'lar about that."

"What did she say to you this morning? Try to remember exactly."

"She asked me if I went to school. I said yes, of course, but now we were up here 'cause it's vacation, and boys act so in town when it's vacation."

"Did you tell her you's primary?" interrupted Louis, who had great contempt for all but grammar school boys.

"She wouldn't 'spect a boy eight years old to be anything else, would she?" retorted Rob.

"Well, go on," said his mother.

"And she said 'didn't I have a brother?'"

"*That's* me!" put in Louis again.

"That is *I*," corrected Aunt Marion.

“And I said yes,” went on Rob, “and then, mamma, she said to-day was the last day in her school, and to ask you if Phil and I couldn’t come in visitors. Can we?”

“P’aps she didn’t know you had me in the fam’ly,” said Louis, quite discouraged.

“If you will promise to be a good, quiet boy, and not disturb the school, I think you may go too,” said mamma.

“Boss!” said Louis, simply.

“I’ll take care of ‘im,” promised Rob; “’n’ he’s quieter ’n I am, anyway.”

“It isn’t the large school,” said Phil; that’s at the other end of the village. He can’t make much of a fuss; there’s only ten or twelve scholars.”

“It’s a little house of a darkish dark color, isn’t it?” asked Louis.

“Very darkish,” replied Phil; “isn’t painted at all.”

“I’ve been by there a billion times!” said Louis. “I ’spose it’s a billion.”

After preparatory toilets the three went away delighted.

"It's an awful big school!" whispered Louis, peeping in at the open door.

"No, it's a little one," disputed Rob.

"Rob Knox, jest see the scholars! there's a trillion, and a billion, and as much as a million, I'll bet!"

"Jest eleven of 'em," said Rob: "I've counted 'em."

"What shall I do with my hat?" asked Louis, who had never been so near a school room before.

"Oh, anything!" said Rob.

"I'll fix it," said Phil.

This whispered conference had attracted the notice of the teacher, a pretty little brown-eyed woman, who now appeared and escorted the boys to seats, accidentally putting Rob and Louis together.

It was a funny little room. There were

not more than twenty seats in all; the teacher's desk was opposite the door, and everything sloped down from the door to the desk. Rob felt as though he were on the deck of a boat.

"Play we've gone to sea," he whispered to Louis. "The other end of the room's gone down in the waves, you know, 's what makes it so low."

Louis looked alarmed.

The window sills were all higher than the teacher's head, so it was of no use to try to look out of doors. But the desks were entirely free from paint, and Louis found it amusing to study the letters and lines, faces and figures that, for years, industrious scholars had been cutting in the wood. Just as he had begun to tire of this, a large girl in the seat in front of them, slipped a book full of pictures, upon the desk. Louis looked at Rob, inquiringly.

"Course so!" said Rob, and Louis turned over the leaves for some time. The flies in the schoolroom weren't half as still as Louis. He couldn't have told, if he had been asked, what picture he had seen on the last page he turned over, because he was so intent upon turning the leaves quietly.

Presently he turned upon Rob a face so full of enquiry that Rob asked in some alarm, "What is it?"

Louis shook his head.

"Yes, yes!" urged Rob; "say it easy."

Louis put his lips close up to Rob's ear and breathed out:

"Is this being a 'good, quiet boy?'"

"*Dreadful!*" said Bob, in the loudest of whispers. "*Beautiful!*" Then he added: "See that girl over there?"

Louis nodded.

"Know who she's looking at?"

Louis shook his head. The girl was cross-eyed, a misfortune that Louis had never noticed in anybody before.

“Well, she’s looking at you, and she likes your looks. She is thinking what a good boy you are. I can tell by her face what she’s thinking.”

This was meant for encouragement, but it only distressed Louis.

“Rob says she’s looking at me,” he thought, “but I shouldn’t think she was. If she is, why don’t she?”

He tried to go back to his book, but those eyes awry looked at him from every face in the pictures. He longed to speak to Rob about it again, but that would not be like being a “good, quiet boy,” he was sure.

“She’s too big to go to school,” he said to himself. “What if she should like my looks so well, she sh’d think she’d carry me off!”

This was a startling idea. Everything was strange to the child and not entertaining, and a four-year-old brain may well have wild fancies when grown-up brains take such notions as they do.

“What if she should!” thought Louis.
“How mamma’d feel!”

The thought of his mother filled his cup to the brim. He knew just where his hat hung in the little entry; he knew just how everything looked out of doors; and, best of all, he knew the way home.

Some child was reading at the teacher’s knee in a steady, sleepy tone. The slow-dropping words were tiresome, and Louis felt that he should soon fall asleep; ‘n’ then, perhaps the girl would — Rob said she was lookin’ at him — ‘n’ Rob said, he certainly *did* say that the other end of the room was down in the waves was what made it so low!”

He rose to his feet. Nobody noticed it, and he tiptoed up the swelling floor to the door, never looking behind him. Out into the grass was but a step from the door, and he did not miss his hat till his mother asked about it as he sat in her lap five minutes later.

Rob was drawing long lines on a slate, and Phil was reading something of interest that his book afforded. Neither of them missed Louis for some time, and when at last they did, they simply exchanged a look of assurance that said as plainly as words, "Oh, he's all right; he knows the way home in a little village like this."

Rob's drawing made a good deal of noise, and the teacher, having inquired into Louis' sudden disappearance, and the probability of his reaching home in safety, proposed that Rob should do a "sum" with the Arithmetic class just called out.

"I should like to," said Rob, smilingly ; "but we only have examples in our school ; we don't do sums. Phil can do 'em I s'pose. He's a grammar schooler."

But Phil was interested in his book, and Rob was easily persuaded to try his hand at a sum. To his dismay it was a "long division example," and he had never succeeded in that branch of mathematics. He attacked it bravely, but it got the better of him.

"No'm, not *exactly* right," said Rob, in reply to the teacher's question ; "you said the answer was 736, but I've got it 511."

"Never mind," said the teacher, cheerfully ; "it is too bad to work in vacation, and you would do better another time, I dare say."

"Now *that's* the boss teacher !" thought Rob ; "I believe I shall go to school here all summer !"

To his great delight, there followed "declamations and recitations." There were brought forward as many of the standard pieces for such occasions, as the size of the school would allow. Rob listened with unbounded pleasure to the "Soliloquy of Hamlet"; the "Speech of Spartacus"; "Come Hither,' Evan Cameron"; and "Bingen on the Rhine".

The girls folded their hands prettily before them, and "gave" "We are Seven"; "Maud Muller"; and, "Oh, the Rain, the Beautiful Rain."

Phil, being urged to speak, repeated all he could remember from *Hiawatha*, Indian names and all.

Rob was then politely invited to "speak a piece." He actually hesitated.

"Well," said he at last, overwhelmed by the solid acquirements of the young people around him, "I can't speak any of these things. I'm a primary."

"Oh, never mind!" said the little brown-eyed teacher, pleasantly; "we shall like to hear anything that you can speak, I am sure."

"She is boss, that's a fact," thought Rob; but he said aloud: "Well, then, I should like to try. Did you ever hear this?"

'Two little kittens, one stormy night,
Began to quarrel, and then to fight;
One had a mouse, the other had none,
And that was the way the quarrel begun.'

No, she had never heard that.

"But," said Rob, I don't like that so well as I do another one. And that one is about a 'stormy night,' and the other one is about bugs. I should think the one about bugs is the best one to speak in the summer, shouldn't you?"

Either would be agreeable; so the recitation began.

“Three little bugs in a basket,
And hardly room for two;
And one was yellow, and one was black,
And one like me or you;
The space was small, no doubt, for all,
So what should the three bugs do?”

“Three little bugs in a basket,
And hardly crumbs for two;
And all were selfish in their hearts,
The same as I or you;
So the strong ones said, ‘We will eat the bread,
And that’s what we will do!’”

There was a smile upon the faces of the school, and Rob felt that he was appreciated; so he went on at a break-neck pace:

“Three little bugs in a basket,
And the beds but two would hold;
And so they fell to quarreling —
The white, the black, and the gold —
And two of the bugs got under the rugs,
And one was out in the cold.”

“He that was left in the basket
Without a crumb to chew,

Or a shred in which to wrap himself
 When the wind across him blew,
 Pulled one of the rugs from one of the bugs,
 And so the quarrel grew."

"So there was war in the basket;
 Oh, pity 'tis, 'tis true!
 But he that was hungry and cold, at last
 A strength from his weakness drew,
 And pulled the rugs from both of the bugs,
 And killed and ate them too!"

Here he tripped and stumbled; such
 speed was sure to be disastrous:

"‘Now when bugs live in a stormy night,’
 Oh, no!

‘Now when kittens live in a basket three’—

Oh, dear, I'm really sorry," finished Rob,
 with a bright blush, "but I can't think
 how the moral goes. It's something like
 'they'd better agree and divide things,'
 and 'leave no bug out in the cold.' I've
 got it mixed up with the one about the
 kittens. They quarreled too, and got swept

out of the room, and the moral's just the same."

"Never mind that," said the teacher again. "It was very nice, and we can guess at the moral."

This closed the "exercises," and when Rob said "good-bye" to the teacher, he put up his face to be kissed.

"What does make you always kiss everybody?" said Phil, on the way home.

"Why, I like to!" said Rob, honestly; "and she is a real *pretty* teacher."

"You're getting too big for it, anyway," said Phil, "and you'd better not."

"You kiss Aunt Marion and mamma and papa, you know you do," argued Rob, "and you're bigger than I am. And they're not a bit nicer than that teacher—only they're ours."

Phil laughed and was silenced, but not convinced.

"We both spoke pieces," said Rob, when they reached home.

"How could you?" said the mother; "what do you know to speak?"

They told the story of the "exercises," and Phil added: "And mamma, we got some applause."

Rob looked suspiciously at Phil's pockets and hands.

"Some applause!" he repeated in surprise. "What are they? Where are they? Let me see 'em!"

Another word with its meaning was added to Rob's vocabulary, but for some weeks he blushed at the mere mention of the word applause.

"Can't we go barefooted, mamma?" begged the boys, now ready for exercise. Every day for two weeks this question had been asked, and every day the answer had been no. But to-day, to their utter sur-

prise, mamma said, "yes, take off your shoes and stockings and try it."

"It is the only way to cure them of it," uncle Tim had said, and now the remedy was to be applied. Away they went, barefooted and happy, to examine the state of a polliwog trap in the river. Louis was miserable in his shoes, forced to wait and see how the other boys liked it.

Two hours later the little fellows came limping along together beside a huge load of hay, but, in place of going as usual to the barn, sat down side by side on the doorstep, and let the hay go by without notice.

"How do you like being barefooted?" asked their mother. Each waited for the other to answer.

"Rob's foot is bleedin'!" cried Louis, who had at once begun an examination. "So's Phil's! oh, my!"

"It was awful stubbly, that field was!" said Rob.

"And we walked all the way up from the intervale on the stubble," said Phil, "because we wouldn't ask the men to let us ride on the hay. They laughed at us because we couldn't go barefooted, but we showed them we could."

"We had to come most of the way up on our toes," said Rob, dolefully; "it was so stubbly."

Mamma bathed the little tired feet tenderly, and neither of the young gentlemen objected to a bit of salve and some soft linen cloths.

"I sh'd think it was jest as well to wear shoes," said Rob.

"I should think it was a great deal better," said mamma, decidedly.

So ended going barefooted; for the subject was never mentioned again.



CHAPTER X.

THE VERY LAST DAY.

IT was Sunday afternoon. The boys had been to church in the morning, but the day was so warm that their mother, after dinner, put them all into light linen suits and begged them to keep as quiet and as cool as possible.

Rob had a "show" out in the shed in one corner. There were three shelves decked with scalloped paper, and over the shelves hung a little curtain. Above the curtain was fastened a long strip of paste-board on which Rob had printed,

KNOXES CURIOSYTYS

ADMISSION 2 PINS.

The curiosities were chiefly of paper, and of Rob's own making, the fruit of his rainy day labors.

"Can't I go out to my curiosities?" asked Rob, on this Sunday afternoon.

"No. Sunday could be better spent in another way."

"But," urged Rob, "you see I don't want to play with the curiosities, nor have the other boys come into 'em; I jest want to go out and hang round. That wouldn't be wicked, would it?"

But mamma was inflexible. He might go and read.

No.

He might go and ask Phil to tell him some stories.

No.

Lie down on the bed beside mamma, and take a nap.

No, no ! couldn't he go to walk ?

The thermometer stood at ninety, so he couldn't by any means take a walk ; but —mamma was always ready— Rob might come and sit beside her and learn a Sabbath School lesson.

This was very hard, Rob thought, but the decree had gone forth and there was no chance for discussion.

Ananias and Sapphira came next on the lesson papers, mamma thought, so Rob, Bible in hand, spelled out the story word by word. Then his mother read it to him smoothly and correctly. Rob yawned a great many times, took a vast number of uncomfortable positions in various parts of the bed, looked out of the window at the blue sky and trees and grass, and nearly broke his neck in an attempt to see, without getting down from the bed, whether Phil was in the hammock. Mamma made

Rob tell her the story, which he did with great correctness as to facts. Then all proper questions on the subject were gone through with and admirably answered. Rob was getting very anxious to join Phil and Louis.

"You may go in a minute," said his mother; "as soon as you tell me just what this lesson seems to you to be about."

"Why," said Rob, surprised, "it's about a man and woman that sold their field. And they didn't get so much money as they ought to for it, and when Saint Peter asked them about it they were so ashamed they died — both of 'em."

It was sometime before Rob went out of doors, after all, because this moral had to be pointed. But he did go at last, tired and ready to be entertained.

"Tell us a story, Phil!" he cried, bursting into the yard under the locusts.

“ Oh bother ! ” replied Phil, briefly.
“ Read one.”

“ I’ve jest read one,” answered Rob,
“ and it takes so long when you have to
spell out the long words. Tell us about
the Red Shoes that danced with the little
girl, and she couldn’t help it, over field
and meadow in rain and sunshine by night
and by day, but it was far worse by night.”

“ Oh, no,” said Phil, sleepily.

“ Tell about the snail, then, that lived
in a forest of burdocks, and how the other
little snail came and married him ’cause
he had a burdock forest and she had only
a bush.”

Phil didn’t answer.

“ Tell ‘ the most extra — *ordin* — ary thing ’
then — that’s a boss story.

“ He’s a hateful, sleepy old thing ; tell
it yourself ! ” suggested Louis, from the
grass.

"Oh, I can't half remember it. There was a king —"

"Is it Hans Andersen's?" asked Louis.

"Yes; and the king said that anybody that would do the most extra — *ordin* — ary thing should marry his daughter. One man drank himself to death trying to do it, and two men ate themselves to death, but that wasn't it. Some boys tried to spit on the small of their own backs. They thought *that* was very remarkable."

"Did they do it?" asked Louis, eagerly.

"Don't know; story doesn't say. Another man made a clock with Moses, and the Garden of Paradise, and a cuckoo, and a grasshopper, and a spectacle maker, and a watchman with a long cape, and a cook, and a stork's nest, and a crow."

"Oh, *my!*" said Louis.

"And another man knocked the clock to pieces, and *he* married the king's daugh-

ter. But the things in the clock all came to life, and the watchman in the cape came out and struck this last man on the head, and *he* married the king's daughter ; so the man that made the clock came out ahead, you see, after all. And the candles in the church were flowers of light, and the gilt stars on the ceiling of the church grew into real stars, and the organ played without anybody to play it."

"Oh, *my!*" said Louis, again.

"That's all there was to it," finished Rob, "but I wish I knew some more."

The day was very sultry. Great hot waves of air came sweeping around the corner of the house into the yard where the children were. The broad street that creeps under the trees, through the village, and goes climbing up a hill away at the end, lay white and still in the heat. The great elms overhanging the street on either

side drooped their leaves white with dust. The still air was yellow with sunshine; now and then an insect hummed out a sleepy story, but the birds among the branches gave no sound. The little white vestry over the way glistened like a china tea cup. Doors and window-blinds were closed and, save these children, the whole village seemed asleep in the sunshine.

Phil began: "Hans Anderson says, too, that in the hot lands the sun burns sure enough."

"This must be one of 'em," broke in Rob.

"No, the people there are mahogany brown, and in the hottest lands they are all burnt to negroes. Everybody has to stay in all day, and the streets are narrow and have high houses built, so that the sunshine falls straight into them from morning till night. People grow thin with it; it's just like a glowing oven."

“ Oh, *dear!* ” said Rob ; “ don’t you know any better story than that. That’s too hot.”

“ Well, he tells one about a Snow Man, with two three-cornered pieces of tile in his head for eyes, and his mouth made of an old rake so that he had plenty of teeth.”

“ Yes, I know ; he quarrelled with the Yard Dog. I don’t care about hearing that one.”

“ Then there’s the Snow Queen.”

“ Boss ! ” said Rob. “ Go ahead on that one ! *That’s cool!* ”

“ Once there was a little boy named Kay, and a little girl named Gerda ; and they were very fond of each other, till one day Kay got a piece of glass in his eyes out of a magic mirror. Then everything looked horrid to him. He said Gerda was ugly, and he laughed at her picture books, and made fun of his own grandmother.

One day he went out to slide with the other boys, and they were all having the fun, and Kay tied his sled to one going by. It was a large sleigh that he tied it to, painted white, with somebody driving in a rough white fur coat, and a rough white fur cap. And Kay rode and rode and rode, and by and bye he couldn't untie his sled. Then he felt dreadfully and wanted to go back; but nobody would hear him, and he was awfully frightened, and the snow storm drifted right in his face. He tried to say the Lord's Prayer, but he couldn't; all he could do was to say the multiplication table."

"Well, I declare!" said Rob; "*that* was funny, anyway."

"And the snow flakes grew larger and larger till they looked like great white hens. By and bye, the man that was driving stood up in the sleigh, and he was a woman!"

“Ho-o-o!” said Rob.

“Yes, disguised, you know. She was the Snow Queen. She was white as snow, and her coat and cap were snow, and when she took Kay into the sleigh to ride with her, he felt as if he was sinking in a snow wreath.”

“Oh-h-h! how *cool* I feel! go on!” said Louis.

“The Queen carried him up to her palace, way up in Finland. The walls of the palace were made of driving snow, and the windows and doors were made of sharp, cutting winds; and when the winds blew the snow about it made great halls. There were polar bears and lots of little white foxes outside, but none of them ever came into the palace. And Kay was awful lonesome. He was blue with cold, too, almost black, but he had got to liking the Snow Queen, and he didn’t

know how cold he was. His heart, you see, was a lump of ice.

In the middle of the biggest hall of all was a frozen lake cracked in a thousand pieces, and when the Queen was at home she sat in the middle of that."

"I sh'd thought sh'd broken through," said Louis.

"Well, she didn't; and all the fun Kay had was making puzzles out of flat pieces of ice—just like our Chinese Puzzle. He was always trying to make the word *Eternity* out of them, and he never could. But the Snow Queen told him that if he would do it he should be his own master, and she would give him the whole world and a pair of new skates besides.

One day she went away for a visit to the warm countries and left Kay all alone, and he thought and thought about the blocks of ice till his skull was almost

cracked. And, do you believe, Gerda came in!

“She had followed him every where to bring him back. She floated down a river in a boat till she came to a beautiful garden. She asked the flowers about Kay, and they couldn’t tell her, and she asked a raven; and the raven took her to a good Prince and Princess, and they gave her a beautiful carriage to go and find Kay. So she started off in the beautiful carriage, and a band of robbers took her carriage away from her, and gave Gerda herself to a little Robber Maiden. But the Robber Maiden, instead of killing her, gave her a Reindeer to carry her to Finland. And he took her to an old woman in Lapland, who said that Kay was really and truly at the Snow Queen’s, and liked it very much because he had a splinter of glass in his eye and his heart, and if he

didn't get them out he would never be like mankind again.

"The Reindeer asked her if she couldn't give Gerda something to take the glass out with, and the old woman said that Gerda had something herself. What do you bet it was?"

"Bet it was a knife," said Louis.

"Bet 'twas some kind of an instrument," said Rob; "or maybe it was just a pin or needle or something."

"No, it was only kindness—just because she was sweet and good. And the Reindeer carried her along to the edge of where the Snow Queen lived; and set her down by a bush with red berries that stood in the snow. From there she had to walk in a snow storm, and all the flakes were alive; some were like great porcupines, and others like snakes all knotted together, and others like bears; but they were all white, of course.

“Gerda was frightened, but she said the Lord’s Prayer — ”

“Didn’t she know her multiplication table ? ” asked Rob.

“The story don’t say, but that wouldn’t have done, anyway ; she had to say the prayer, that’s what helped her through. It was so cold up there that her own breath when it came out of her mouth, looked like smoke, and it changed into angels, and the angels drove away the snow flakes, and Gerda got on first rate after all.

“When she came in at the palace door, there sat Kay on the ice, trying to make out his word in the puzzle ; and she said the prayer again and went in. But Kay didn’t know her, and he didn’t think who she was till after she put her arms round his neck and cried and cried till the tears reached his heart and thawed the ice and eat up the glass splinter. Then Kay cried,

and that washed the splinter out of his eye, and he was all right again. And the pieces of ice just went together themselves and made the *Eternity* he had been trying to make so long—just because he let them alone, you see, and because he loved Gerda again.

“And they went away home together, and that’s all.”

“It’s nice and cool,” said Louis, “but I don’t understand it.”

“Why,” said Rob, “it’s to show what goodness ’ll do for you.”

“And that you mustn’t take up silly notions, mamma says; that’s what ailed Kay,” said Phil.

“And mustn’t follow strange folks away,” added Louis. “But it’s gettin’ awful dark; what’s the matter?”

“’Most night, I s’pose,” said Rob; “you said you wouldn’t tell a story, Phil, and

here you've been tellin' one all the afternoon. A boss one, too," he added, to make up for this thrust.

It had thundered for sometime at intervals, but the boys had been too much absorbed in their "cool story" to notice it. Great clouds hung low about the mountains, and grew heavy and heavier. Great sheets of fire flashed from the clouds, followed by peal after peal of thunder.

The rain poured down in torrents; the long grass swayed to and fro; the wind blew in great gusts; the elm branches tossed fiercely about; and the corn lay beaten to the ground.

"Oh, dear!" said Louis, "all uncle Tim's New Jersey cows are out! but I'm glad we got in the bat and ball, for that's a private bat and val'ble."

In an hour the wind was soft and cool, — "been washed," Rob said — and, in place of the heavy black clouds, great white

heaps of fleece lay against the blue sky and hung lovingly about the mountains. Flies danced and buzzed in the warm sunshine, and the great elm trees and the locusts stood glittering with water-drops.

All the boys were barefooted to walk in the wet grass for the last time ; for this was the last day of vacation.

“ Oh, mamma,” said Louis, wading through the tall grass to a mud puddle, and putting in one little bare foot after the other, over and over again, “ Oh, mamma, if we only didn't have to read and spell, we could stay up here always, and go haying and things, and tell stories, and have showers, and never learn anything at all.”

But they did go home the very next day — Phil and Bob went to school ; and if you care to hear from them again, look out for the next of the FOREST CITY SERIES.





This book is DUE on the last
date stamped below

10m-11,'50 (2555) 470

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 475 441 2

PZ7
D36a

